The sound of the raindrops on the banana leaves was like the thudding of drums. I heard thousands of musical notes flowing out of the secret lairs of the black Karkitakam night.

— M. T. Vasudevan Nair, *The Demon Seed and Other Writings*

University of Alberta

Socio-Musical Mobility and Identity in Kerala, South India: Modern Entanglements of Ritual Service, Labouring Musicians, and Global Artistry

by

Kaley Reid Mason ©

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

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Abstract

Political and socio-economic regional dynamics in the southwestern Indian state of Kerala created key identity opportunities for disadvantaged communities in Post-Independence India. For marginalized Dalit castes previously stigmatized as ritually impure (untouchable), a combination of public education, land reforms, and participatory democracy established fertile conditions for empowerment in the struggle to become socially mobile. Among them, the Malayan Hindu performing caste of ritualists and traditional healers are resignifying their collective and individual standing in the public sphere by labouring musically. In this process, hereditary musicality serves as a strategic means for gaining access to diverse forms of capital, including cultural prestige, economic resources, and political status.

This thesis starts from the premise that Malayan musical families have cultivated a profound musical sensibility over generations of providing ritual services to high-caste landowning families in the Malabar region of northern Kerala. Anchored in collaborative ethnographic case studies with Malayan families, the study explores how musicians are investing musical assets, rooted in feudal relations, to enhance their musical reputations in modern arenas of performance. Departing from the established model of caste relations that privileges collectivities over families and individuals, I use a musician-centred lens to breach the limits of dominant theoretical approaches to caste mobility as gro[illegible]-based movement. Whereas the concept of Sanskritization contends that a caste's successful shift in societal ranking is usually linked to widespread rejection of hereditary occupational practices considered polluting, the Malayan demonstrate how pre-existing skills can be fluidly adapted, converted, or reframed productively as a catalyst for mobility under certain socio-historical conditions. To explain how the Malayan recontextualize their musicality, I draw on Marxist-inspired theoretical tools to develop a model of Malayan socio-musical mobility. I conclude by insisting that musician caste identities provide a wider spectrum of possibility for improving social status by either emphasizing or subtlizing caste affiliation in musical fields of production.

Acknowledgments

This thesis would not have been possible without the assistance, expertise, and generosity of many people. First, my supervisor and mentor, Regula Qureshi, nurtured this project from its inception, encouraging me to engage the social and the political in her model of critical music scholarship. Michael Frishkopf and Andie Palmer added their expert support and guidance, bringing complementary perspectives to my committee. In Ottawa, Stephen Inglis provided valuable advice and feedback based on his extensive ethnographic experience in South India. Though not officially on the committee, Carl Urion had a profound influence on my direction and approach, teaching me above all, the virtues of compassionate listening.

Beyond my inner circle of doctoral supervision, I benefited from the experience and wisdom of many other individuals working in academia. At the University of Alberta, David Gramit and Henry Klumpenhouwer expanded my theoretical scope with their respective strengths in musicology and music theory; Jean DeBernardi gave me critical linguistic tools that proved to be indispensable in the field; Vinod Bhardwaj, Mrs. Paranjape, and Amie Maciszewsky initiated my practical training in Indian music; at the University of Kerala in Thiruvananthapuram, I studied South Indian classical music with K. S. Reshmi under the direction of professor K. Omanakutty Amma, former Head of the Department of Music; Professor Manu Bhaskar, of the Department of Sociology, guided my early reading and interest in Kerala society; Jameela Beegum, Professor and Head of the Institute of English and Director of the Centre for Canadian Studies, was helpful throughout our stay in the capital. Special mention goes to the late P. K. Rajan, former Vice Chancellor of Kannur University, for facilitating an early visit to the northern districts and eventually doing everything possible to assist in my research and help us get settled in Malabar. His kindness will always be remembered fondly. Also in Kannur district, M. Dasan, Professor and Head of the School of English and Foreign Languages at Kannur University, welcomed us into his home and network of friends and freely shared ideas about the inner workings and histories of the Dalit movement in India. In anthropology, Professor and Department Head Ananda Bhanu, kindly arranged access to the library, while anthropologists S. Gregory and Jancy provided professional advice and gracious hospitality. Professor Emeritus in history, K. K. N. Kurup, shared his extensive knowledge of northern Kerala society and granted me use of the library at the Malabar Institute for Research and Development. The same goes for Professor Raghavan Payyanad at Calicut University's Centre for Folklore Studies, M. V. Visnu Namboodiri, Chairman for the Kerala Folklore Academy, and his predecessor, Professor Kannan, a leading Malayan authority on teyyam ritual arts. In France, Professor Gilles Tarabout of the École française d'Extrême-Orient in Paris provided me with copies of many of his publications about Kerala society. Professor Emeritus, Rodney Moag, of the University of Texas at Austin, supervised my foundational training in Malayalam. Finally, special thanks goes to Daniel Neuman, Executive Vice Chancellor and Provost of the Faculty of Arts at UCLA, for his incisive external review of my thesis.

This dissertation benefited from the collaborative assistance of many friends and colleagues who worked diligently on my behalf in and out of the field. Ullas Ragesh was a resourceful and unwavering guide; Hareendran P. was a thorough and intuitive interpreter in the field; Anup P.'s professionalism as a translator and interpreter was greatly admired and appreciated; as was Pradeep Kumar's skilful navigation of the social, linguistic, and political terrain of Malabar; Subhash influenced my project through our stimulating conversations and his generous assistance with interpretation in his region of Trissur. I thank their families for the hospitality they extended on several occasions. In addition, I also wish to acknowledge all the graduate and undergraduate students who welcomed us into their intellectual milieu at the university of Kerala in Thiruvananthapuram, and especially, at Kannur University near Thalassery, where we spent the bulk of our time while living in India.

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It is impossible to single out all the Malayan consultants whose stories and knowledge made this dissertation possible. It goes without saying that much of what I have written is truly collaborative, though I take full responsibility for any interpretive errors. There are, however, some individuals who merit special mention. Rajesh Komath, a graduate of the Centre for Development Studies in Thiruvananthapuram, was my first insider contact in the Malayan community from southern Kannur. Likewise, another academic insider, anthropologist M. P. Damodaran, put me in touch with important elders in the northern parts of the district, while Srijith, a lecturer in the School of Life Sciences, welcomed me into his extended Malayan family. Following their collegial assistance I came to know and develop friendships with the following prominent consultants: my guru, Swamidasan and family, especially his son, Jithesh, and daughter, Rija, and her husband, Ananth; Rajesh Komath's father, Swaminathan; Eranholy Bharatan; Eranholy Pavithran and family; K. P. C. Panikkar and family; Suresh Panikkar and family; Kunhiraman Panikkar; and M. T. Manoharan. Other key consultants in the community included Cheriya, Lakshmanan, Ajindranath, C. K. Andy and son, Sivadasan, among many others.

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To my parents, Morgan and Judy,
my partner in life, Laure,
and the Malayan community

C

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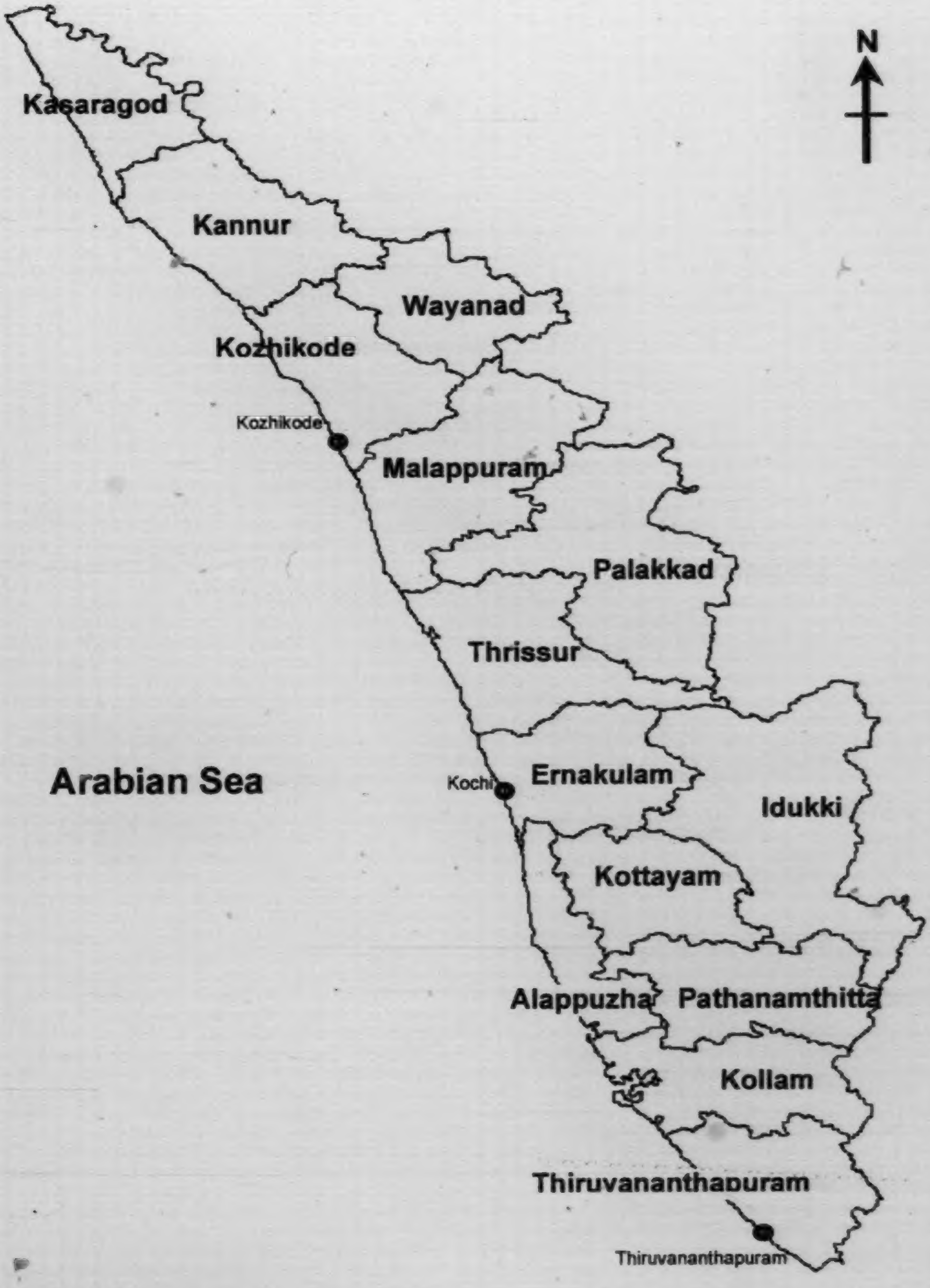
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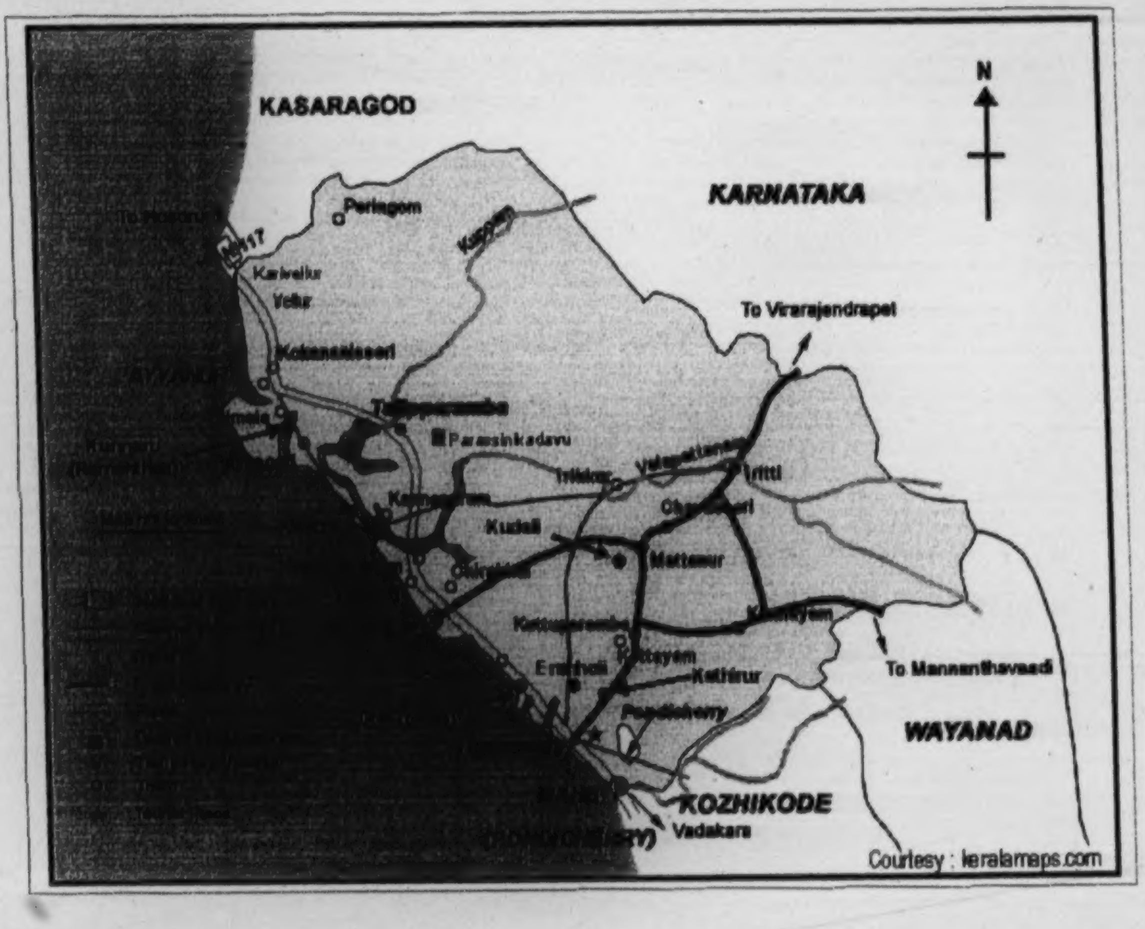
Figure 1. Map of Kerala

www.spiderkerala.com/ kerala/maps/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KOZHIKODE
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Courtesy : keralamaps.com

Figure 2. Map of Kannur District

www.keralamaps.com

INTRODUCTION

Purpose of the Study

This dissertation explores how marginalized ritual specialists in the Southwestern Indian state of Kerala mobilize hereditary musical assets to improve their status in society. Centring on a case study of the Malayan Hindu Dalit caste of spirit-medium performers, it brings historical and contemporary lived experiences into focus around the nexus of musical labour and social identity. The study extends from the premise that conventional static framings of caste identity do not adequately account for the occupational fluidity and regional hierarchical dynamics that characterize everyday life in modern India. Accordingly, the goal is to develop a fresh perspective on performing castes that continue to cultivate artistic knowledge in hereditary ritual contexts, while also confronting socio-economic challenges and opportunities in newly established fields of the Indian public sphere. Classroom education, civil service, electoral politics, private enterprise, media networks, cultural institutes—these structures and structuring forces have dramatically altered how hereditary musicality and caste identity mutually reconfigure each other (Neuman [1980] 1990; Subramanian 2006).

Adopting Turino's view, that "identity is grounded in multiple ways of knowing with affective and direct experiential knowledge often being paramount" (1999:221), I draw on ethnographic evidence to show how varied Malayan experiences of Indian modernity call into question stereotyped representations of hereditary ritual musicians as immobile and backward in the established model of caste relations. The critique serves as a catalyst for putting forward an agency-centred theory of socio-musical mobility: a way of interrogating the experiential interplay between material and semiotic practices underpinning identities as loci for social change.

The Ethnographic Domain

The physical and cultural region forming the ethnographic backdrop for this study is the Indian state of Kerala—a narrow strip of tropical territory along the southwestern coast of the Indian Peninsula. The region is unified by its geographical location between the Arabian sea and the Western Ghats (southern mountain range), and linguistically, by its official language, Malayalam[1]. A leading Indian state in social development due to remarkably high levels of literacy, low infant mortality, relatively high gender equity, and grassroots political participation, Kerala has in recent decades attracted many social science scholars and development agencies interested in applied models of social mobility (Franke and Chasin 1992; Jeffery 1992; Sen 1999; Osella and Osella 2000; Isaac and Franke 2000; Heller 2001). This growing international awareness is mainly due to the state's impressive profile as one of the few places in the world where basic living, health, and educational needs are met for most families without the trickle-down support of large-scale industrialization. The distinctly mobile social milieu that evolved in tandem with this achievement invites critical inquiry into the representational strategies used by disadvantaged groups to reformulate their identities in Kerala's public sphere: how they exercise agency with greater scope for empowerment than would be possible in other parts of the subcontinent. Thus, an integrated approach to researching musical livelihoods, social mobility and identity offers a unique ethnomusicological perspective to the expanding body of work concerned with socio-economic change in Kerala.

In addition to introducing a musician-centred point of view to debates unfolding in the social sciences, this dissertation aims to bring development scholarship into conversation with an equally important area of interest in Kerala: the performing arts and new sources of patronage. While the region's rich artistic heritage is most famously associated with the dance-drama, *katakaḷi* (Zarrilli 1999), there are other equally fascinating traditions that have attracted considerable international attention (Menon [1978] 1996). They range from the only living example of classical Sanskrit theatre,

---

[1] Spoken by all castes and religious communities in Kerala, Malayalam belongs to the Dravidian family of South Indian languages, which include Kannada, Telegu, and Tamil (Krishnamurti 2003). Besides the etymological root, *mala*, for hill, it does not imply a specific link to the Malayan Hindu caste who are the principal agents of this study.

kūdiyāṭṭam (Richmond 1990), to a rare form of shadow puppetry (Blackburn 1996), to a virtuosic temple drumming idiom called *tayampaka*, (Groesbeck 1999). From ritual to theatre, contributions to the study of Kerala's art forms speak from a variety of disciplinary standpoints based in and outside the state, including folklore, theatre studies, musicology, as well as anthropology. Yet despite the multi-disciplinary, international scope of the discourse, performance-centred studies on hereditary artist communities in Kerala have not problematized how musical labour, social mobility and modern identities mutually reconfigure one another in response to changing socio-economic and political climates. They have yet to address how performing communities are equipped and positioned differently vis-à-vis other groups to puruse alternative pathways for social change.

New opportunities for integrating identity, mobility, and performance have raised lifestyle expectations among artist families since the struggles for Indian independence in the early twentieth century and the subsequent formation of Kerala as a separate state in 1956.[2] Unprecedented participation in political economies at regional, national and global levels on one hand, combined with Kerala's distinctive social histories and power struggles on the other, created a horizon of possibilities for performing communities seeking to adapt hereditary skills and knowledge to improve their socio-economic status while nurturing continuity with an ancestral past. Joining the body of literature focussed on artistic ritual practices in contemporary Northern Kerala (Tarabout 1986; Ashley and Holloman 1990; Freeman 1991; Neff 1995; Guillebaud 2003; Aubert 2004), this study centres on the Malayan caste of hereditary traditional healers and performers who derive a remarkably versatile musical sensibility from their traditional occupation as *teyyam* spirit-medium specialists.

Evoking a way into the thesis, in the following section I draw on fieldnotes to describe a scene at a teyyam festival I witnessed in the region of Malabar in Northern Kerala. The high caste family sponsoring the event is among the most prestigious in Kannur district (Kurup 1995), with many of its members affluently based in metropolitan Indian centres and global cities abroad. Once a year, businessmen, professionals, and high ranking military officials, often accompanied by Western guests, make the trip home to reaffirm their matrilineal family's position as dominant landowning patrons of the arts and devotees of local gods and goddesses. Families from all castes living in the villages nearby attend, joining others from outside the area to witness the splendour of the festival's renewal of local prosperity in the agrarian cycle of the land (Payyanad 1998); they also come to receive blessings from local deities embodied in a human medium. The presence of high profile Indian and foreign guests reinforces the prestige associated with the family's annual ritual obligation to provide a venue for worshiping local deities publicly on a grand scale. The Malayan musicians and spirit-medium performers who provide the ritual services are equally bound by rights and duties inherited from their ancestral lineages. Together, the two communities recreate a patron-client relationship rooted in feudal relations of production.

---

[2] Kerala was the first democracy to elect a communist government, and the first Indian state to empower an opposition (non-Congress) political party in a state legislature.

Jan.28, 2003, 4:30am: Koodali Thazhathavidu, Kannur Dist.

The early morning air is cool in the courtyard of the prestigious Koodali Thazhathavidu, the ancestral estate of a legendary Nambiar taṟavāṭŭ. Beneath the dark silhouettes of gently leaning coconut and jackfruit trees, some men, women, and children have put cloth towels or tuques over their heads to guard against the dampness of the dew. On the porches, in front of shrines and hanging from rafters, shapely brass lamps of different sizes burn coconut oil continuously in the background, illuminating the festive atmosphere with soft patches of scented flames mixed with harsher, odourless lighting from the bluish-tinted fluorescent tubes installed on branches and roofs. In the clearing between a 300 year-old eṭṭukeṭṭu (two attached traditional quadrangular Nayar matrilineal homes) and a larger two-story house, the final mournful verses of a song invoking the Goddess Uciṭṭa Bhagavati are punctured by the entry of high-pitched trills on strong beats played like a march on four tall cylindrical wooden drums (ceṇṭas). Elaborately adorned with red body paint and a round flat headdress with long thin yellowish strips of tender coconut fronds dangling over his face, the teyyam performer or *kōlakkāran sits on a wooden stool and sways languidly from side to side in preparation to receive the śakti (power) I'm told will soon enter his body.*

The long elegant white muṇṭūs worn by the drummers are tied high above the waist over their bare torsos; they use narrow sticks with curved ends in both hands and balance the instrument with the drum head facing up in a bent, upright position with straps made of cloth, fastened diagonally over their shoulders. The lead singer of the group—a thin, clean-shaven, senior man with greyish-white hair and wearing a red shawl draped over his bare upper body—plays a vīkkŭ, a shorter lower-pitched drum that has a larger diameter. He uses only one stick to outline a rhythmic cycle of eight beats with booming pulses. The musicians stand in a crescent formation a few metres behind the medium while ritual attendants make final adjustments to the Bhagavati's magnificent attire. Suddenly, the senior man with the red shawl calls out as the medium, now the Goddess, abruptly stands and blesses attendants who bow with hands clasped deferentially. She then responds to a swell of drum rolls with a spin that sends the thin strips of tender coconut fronds hanging from her waist swirling. A transitional pattern is beat forcefully by the same leader and a slower rhythmic cycle at a walking pace in seven beats accompanies her over to the area in front of the main entrance of the eṭṭukeṭṭu.

A pile of glowing embers smoulders in between the taṟavāṭŭ and the sacred martial arts training centre known as the kaḷari. On the raised porch of the eṭṭukeṭṭu, brightly coloured saris fill the entranceway around the massive teak pillars where women and girls are huddled together to witness the splendour of the Goddess' dance and oratory. The seven-beat cycle is doubled in tempo and the Bhagavati responds by dancing around in a controlled, yet spontaneous energetic style. Soon the drums begin repeating a driving short cycle characterized by successive pounding beats in the bass accompanied with rolling patterns in the higher-pitched ceṇṭa that crescendo to a rest that marks the end of the cycle. Gradually, the intensity increases, provoking Uciṭṭa Bhagavati into a frenzy at which point she throws the body of the medium repeatedly onto the hot coals; five ritual attendants carefully place a long narrow branch of bamboo under the body each time to help protect the medium from catching on fire. Men and boys crowd around the pile of embers in a wide circle, frequently moving into new positions to jostle a better view or clear out of the path of the unpredictable Bhagavati. She pierces *the energetic soundscape with sporadic screams as the musicians continue to frame and invigorate her performance.*

Theoretical Approaches to Social Identity

Throughout the 1990s, music scholarship responded to post-structural developments in social sciences and cultural studies by making social identity a thematic area for engaging new concepts of ethnicity, race, gender, class, sexuality, power and place. An initiative popularized by the Birmingham subcultural studies movement, the use of identity as a conceptual tool in representations of marginalized groups became common practice for confronting issues of power, domination, and resistance (Hebdige 1979). In contrast with research on individual self-identity strategies in social psychology, the cultural studies discourse used identity primarily in the collective sense, to refer to how social groups define themselves and are defined externally by others. The expression and maintenance of boundaries that distinguish different groups in society was a principal focus. However, the growth of interdisciplinary initiatives in the late 90s led to an increase in use of ethnographic methods that relied heavily on individual consultants, a paradigm shift that raised questions about the validity of models that reduce identities to social groups. The definitive moment foreshadowing this reorientation in the field of ethnomusicology was the publication of Frank Mitchell's *Blessingway Singer* (1979), a collaborative project with McAllester and Frisbie that served as an important model for doing research with individuals throughout the 80s and early 90s, particularly in work with First Nations communities (Vander 1988; Smith 1994). Although group-based categories continued to be widely explored through the lens of identity, it became less tenable to gloss over the complexities of individual variation and histories that resist categorization. The methodological turn towards using biographies, individual portraits, and life histories signalled an awareness of the overemphasis on collectivity in music scholarship.[3]

After more than a decade of research on group identities it is tempting to conclude that the heuristic currency of identity as a concept for analyzing cultural practices and the politics of difference (and belonging) has significantly waned. The rising popularity of new theoretical tools to account for individual variation through emphasis on mixture and heterogeneity is a symptom of the change in priority and direction in social theory. Hybridity, pluralism, borderlands, transnationalism, transgender studies, cosmopolitanism, global cities, migration, travel, cyberscapes, and tourism—these are some of the new disciplinary foci that have replaced earlier concerns with stable, distinctive categories of identification in the study of culture. But I would agree with Stokes's recent stance, arguing that what is needed are more sophisticated models capable of interrogating the evolving complexities of identity formation, now that the concept has effectively imploded to the extent that it can no longer be treated as a homogeneous semiotic signpost for group boundaries (2003). Moreover, replacing unilinear teleologies of capitalism and modernity are multilinear, plural capitalisms and alternative modernities (Blim 2000; Gaonkar 2000), which present new challenges for ethnographers seeking culturally-specific and appropriate explanations for how individual actors make sense of who they are becoming, in relation to whom they aspire to be.

It is therefore increasingly uncomfortable to describe group affiliations in terms of discrete compartments, whether national, ethnic, racial, or gender by definition. Recognizing that perspectives concerned with distilling identities from music do not provide a way for interrogating the relational dynamics of performance, new frameworks for music analysis are no longer content with mapping identity onto music or vice versa. Equipped with agency-centred principles established by practice theory (Bourdieu 1977; Ortner 1984), the emphasis is now on conceptualizing identity as a process of identification. Framed in this way, identity-as-process challenges us to problematize how individuals and groups struggle to improve socio-economic positioning in interactive fields using whatever resources are available to them, including musical heritability

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[3] It is worth mentioning that at the same time as ethnographic music scholarship was moving towards an ethnomusicology of the individual, musicology was shifting away from the life-and-works paradigm to consider larger societal patterns in the history of Western art music (Kerman 1985).

(Bourdieu 1984; Waterman 1990; Guilbault 1993; Diamond 1994). The process is created through social interaction marked by a continuous state of flux, adaptation, tension, negotiation, re-creation, and re-presentation. Hence, Qureshi insists that identity is not the study of "...value in objects—property and music—but of the human dynamic of that value" (1994:345-6). Curiously, however, music scholars have not always been effective at making the distinction between sound performance and the social relations that make music possible. Accordingly, this thesis enlists a dynamic and relational perspective on identity for the task of confronting conventional models of caste in representations of musicians in South India.

The relationship between music and social mobility is necessarily mediated by how individual actors situate themselves in relation to others using symbolic and material resources. A paradigm for problematizing identity as the interface between musical performance and social advancement must therefore centre on the social relations that produce music, rather than on mapping identities onto music objects (ibid.). This constructive and inherently social understanding of identity has important implications for doing research in India, given that cultural references, resources and the rules governing their social use are place-specific. Accounting for these differences (socio-cultural, historical, material) is precisely the thrust behind the postcolonial concept of alternative modernities, the need to recognize that "the values that attend modern aspiration interact powerfully with the construction of selfhood and social or material endeavors in diverse world areas" (Knauft 2002:4).

While caste is easily the most well-known social category associated with South Asia, as many have insisted, it is only one among many options for positioning that have shaped a distinctive framework for experiencing modernity in India (Appadurai 1986; Inden 1990; Dirks 2001). Still, caste remains a profound "ideology of identification" that is sustained both internally by group insiders and externally by outsiders (Brass 1991; Jenkins 1997). For that reason it requires some explanation in order to appreciate how Malayan use their caste affiliation strategically. Identity, conceived relationally, must be grounded in the particular social parameters of caste experience and knowledge in order to serve productively as an interpretive key for understanding social mobility among hereditary Malayan musicians.

Unpacking Caste

When the Portuguese landed on the Indian Malabar coast off northern Kerala in 1498, they encountered an ideology that legitimised a rigid social hierarchy based on priestly interpretations of the Hindu Vedic scriptures. At the same time they observed villages organized into kinship-based groups called *jātis*, which were divided according to hereditary occupations, including traditional healers and performers. Erroneously, the Portuguese conflated an ideology and a dynamic social reality into one category, *casta*, meaning race lineage, and the term has since been used to refer to both the universal religious doctrine and the particular social manifestation of rules and norms influencing interaction between unequally positioned occupational groups living in the same village. The problem with this was that jātis have always operated as flexible and fluid identity markers in a system of village organization defined by shifting power relations (Thapar 2002; Stern 2003). By the time the British conducted their census in the late nineteenth century, the four Vedic categories of society known as *varnas*,[4] from the Sanskrit for colour, were perceived as immutable social groups—with Brahmans at the top of the religious hierarchy serving as priests and educators, kingly Kshatriya next in line, followed by the commerce-oriented Vaisyas, and the artisan and manual labouring Shudras. A fifth category of people were stigmatized as untouchable and occupied the lowest position beneath the system.

The Malayan belong to this broader segment of Indian society officially listed as scheduled castes (Singh [1993] 1995). The term Dalit, meaning broken or oppressed from the Sanskrit *dal*,[5] has since the late twentieth century come to replace the demeaning

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[4] First appearing in the Rig Veda around 800 BCE, the *varnaśrama* system was more systematically elaborated in the Laws of Manu (composed between 200 BCE and 200 CE), which divided Hindu society is into four groups based on relative degrees of purity and pollution: *Brahman* (scholars and priests), *Kshatriya* (martial rulers), *Vaisya* (merchants and traders), and *Shudra* (artisans and labourers). See chapter four in Lipner (1993) for an in depth discussion on varna.

[5] Dalit, from the Sanskrit *dal* meaning broken or crushed, is the self-designated term preferred by many people belonging to caste/communities perceived as occupying inferior positions below the ritual ranks of the caste system according to the varnaśrama Hindu doctrine. Dalits were considered highly polluting as a result of their occupational identities and lifestyles and were labelled untouchable. Under the British Raj,

"untouchable" and patronizing "Harijan" labels formerly used to refer to this section of society, whereas scheduled caste continues to be the official designation.[6] The term scheduled caste (SC) was adopted by British colonial census and judicial authorities following the Portuguese "casta," and is widely understood today as a euphemism symbolizing centuries of socio-economic and ritual exclusion based on Hindu doctrines which endorsed an idealized hierarchical system organized according to varna. In theory, the caste system promoted an ordering of social life determined ritually through relative degrees of purity and pollution that regulated physical contact between groups and economically by organized occupational specialization (jāti), although in practice flexibility and fluidity was always the rule. Following Indian Independence, special reference to scheduled castes (SCs) and scheduled tribes (STs) was incorporated into the constitution in 1950 as part of an affirmative action policy that addresses issues of discrimination by reserving positions in educational and public service institutions for members of these communities. Since its inception, the reservation system has been repeatedly contested and critics insist that instead of bringing about the demise of caste it has had the reverse effect of strengthening and politicizing its boundaries, a process described by Dumont as "substantialisation" (1966) and more recently referred to more flexibly as the ethnicization of caste in post-structural discourse (Dirks 2001; Deliège 2004). This study of Malayan musical families demonstrates how caste continues to provide a key symbolic and social resource in the formulation of identities, finding

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census authorities classified these communities as scheduled castes with the intention of codifying in law special status to access reserved positions in educational institutions and administrative service as a means of escaping the cycle of systematic discrimination and exploitation characterizing their relations with other castes in Indian society; it was also a colonial move to undermine nationalist and liberation efforts to build solidarity across Hindu and other religious social boundaries (Dirks 2001). The term Dalit has recently replaced the externally-imposed, patronizing "Harijan," meaning child of God, and has gained widespread currency among diverse groups, associations, and illegal paramilitary organizations (Naxalites) advocating social justice under the collective banner of the Dalit movement (see Omvedt 1994; Ilaiah 1996; Ambedkar 2002; Jacob 2002). According to the 2005 census, Dalits comprise 16.2 percent of the Indian population (Census of India 2005). Despite the widespread politicized use of the term, it was not commonly used among Malayan consultants in the field, likely due to the pervasive influence in Kerala of communist ideologies that publicly resist sectarian caste-based movements for social justice (Ilaiah and Dasan 2004, personal communication)

[6] Although the word caste is widely used in administrative and academic milieus, the most common words employed in most social settings in Kerala are the Sanskrit-derived *jāti* and the Malayalam *samudāyam* (community), which are equally applied to non-Hindu religious groups in general, including Christian, Muslim, Jain, Sikh, Buddhist, and traditional religions, as well as to subdivisions within these communities.

expression through explicit modes of ethnicization and implicit modes of de-ethnicization: the difference is one between publicly affirming caste solidarity and group boundaries, and conversely, drawing on caste resources like specialist knowledge in public contexts without overtly displaying caste signifiers.

In the last two decades, a movement led by historians and anthropologists has critically revisited previous assumptions about the role of caste in Indian society (Appadurai 1986; Dirks 2001; Deliège 2004). A greater awareness of how the social category constitutes a flexible social and political resource that can be collectively or individually manipulated to succeed in an expanding middle-class, has opened new possibilities for studying social mobility. Avenues for repositioning caste identities and relations have multiplied in the wake of socio-political and economic changes characterized by Stern as a bourgeois revolution on the subcontinent ([1993] 2003). Although increased mobility has encouraged a more flexible approach to understanding caste relations, representational discourses still frequently approach caste as an embedded social category without problematizing how individuals or groups create caste-based identities to achieve specific ends.

In the case of the Malayan, the government of India continues to uphold the community's status as a scheduled caste, which gives them special access to jobs and educational opportunities in the public sector. Reservation politics have significantly reduced the community's reliance on their traditional hereditary occupations, which include spirit-mediumship, traditional healing, and midwifery. Presently, Malayan can be found in all types of job descriptions, from bus conductors, office clerks, and railway employees, to teachers, nurses, police officers, and university lecturers. This is especially true for the younger generations who managed to achieve higher levels of education. Fewer men are taking up the traditional occupation of providing ritual and musical services related to teyyam, a spirit-medium ceremony held at high and low caste shrines or small temples in northern Kerala. At the same time, women have mostly lost their hereditary role as midwives, as modern hospitals, doctors trained in "English" medicine, and other health care services have become more accessible. Despite these trends away from hereditary contexts, the dissertation aims to demonstrate how hereditary knowledge remains an important source of identity and continues to provide or supplement livelihoods for many families, either directly through traditional settings in the case of teyyam, or through adaptation and conversion to modern job descriptions, including music teachers, political singers, and performing artists.

Hereditary Musicians and Shifting Patronage in India

In the years preceding and following Indian Independence from Britain (1947), changes in the political economy on the Indian Peninsula fundamentally altered the traditional modes of patronage that previously sustained families belonging to hereditary performing castes. Replacing feudal courts, temples, shrines, and estates as the primary patrons and connoisseurs of performing arts were state-sponsored institutions, including music schools and the All India Radio, as well as regional film industries and public concerts, supported by the rising middle classes of predominantly urban, bourgeois, affluent business and professional families. More recently, opportunities to participate in the global economy have expanded, as affluent consumers with cosmopolitan tastes for world music increasingly invite Indian performers to showcase their professional musicality in global networks of performing venues abroad, including at festivals, concert halls, recording studios, educational institutions, and tourist sites. This sweeping spatial reorientation of patronage in India was largely a consequence of the transition to a free market economy and land reforms that brought about the decline of pre-existing positions of feudal authority. Deprived of vast agricultural land and surpluses, former landowning classes could no longer afford to support performing families attached to their estates, thereby forcing musicians, dancers, actors, and other artists to seek alternative means of subsistence from emerging public and private sectors (Neuman [1980] 1990; Zarrilli 1991; Subramanian 2006).

Despite having nourished creative excellence in music, dance, and drama for centuries, the patron/servant feudal arrangement was superseded by new stakeholders ranging from government arts administrators, scholars, private entrepreneurial interests, and expanding domestic and foreign audiences. This shift in relations of artistic patronage is characterized in many nationalist and Western narratives as an important component of India's modernization process: the story of how the tangible and intangible artistic treasures of former kingdoms were reappropriated as national culture under the banner of a Hinduized and feminized *Bharat mata*, or mother India (Goswami 2004). What is less clear in narratives of nationhood is how these transformations influenced performers' social status and the extent to which individuals remain embedded in regional configurations of pre-existing social ties even as they build new relations of patronage at modern venues. While the impact of nationalism and capitalism on aesthetic forms and practices has been well researched from various genre perspectives, the question of how performers from different regional and class backgrounds are making sense of who they are, and who they imagine they can be, through participation in increasingly mixed patronage arrangements has been relatively less explored.

Historically, most hereditary performing castes throughout the Indian Subcontinent were considered low class with limited scope for reinventing their identity or improving their socio-economic position in society. With the exception of Brahmin musical lineages, most musicians were treated and viewed as servants on par with other artisan castes that settled in the vicinity of high caste landholding patrons. The most common frame of reference for popular notions about Indian musicians stems from the North Indian Hindustani classical Muslim and Hindu hereditary performers, who served as instrumentalists, singers, and accompanists at royal Hindu and Muslim courts of the fertile Gangetic plain. Most Indic music scholarship has centred on these musical lineages and consequently debates over the status of musical performers have typically drawn from examples in northern Hindi-speaking areas. With increasing research among musicians from other regions of the Subcontinent and other performing contexts in Indian society, more diverse representations are challenging the stereotypical profile of musicians based on northern royal patronage of elite Hindustani art music. Accordingly, a distinction must be drawn between the low status associated with northern classical musicians who were mainly patronized by royal courts during pre-colonial and colonial times, and the experiences of other performers outside elite musical domains, including Dalits and Adivasis (tribal peoples), whose musical assets and identities are only now attracting more serious attention in performance studies (Prasad 1985; Babiracki 1991;

Sherinian 1998; Guillebaud 2003; Wolf 2006). How did these non-classical musicians manage the transition to a free market economy within their respective regional milieus? In what ways have mixed opportunities for patronage influenced their socio-musical status and expectations for advancement in society? Joining pioneering initiatives to recover the voices left out of dominant narratives of Indian history and culture, this thesis raises important questions about identity and socio-musical mobility in the south-western state of Kerala. To a growing critical body of subaltern music scholarship, it offers an ethnographic case study of musical families from a low-status, Hindu, Dalit caste of traditional healers and spirit medium specialists.

In addition to its subaltern focus, the project represents a rare attempt to explore connections between identity, social mobility, and musical labour in a contemporary South Asian context. Although music and social mobility have been addressed separately in relation to identity politics, the task of investigating all three as an interlocking domain of experience is still a relatively new undertaking with critical implications for rethinking conventional models of caste relations and musicians' agency in post-Independence India.

Important research initiatives in this area include Regula Qureshi's work on the socio-economic status of Indian musicians in which she addresses social mobility and identity as part of her focus on the political economy of Hindustani classical music (see 2000, 2003, 2006). More recently, Dard Neuman's Ph.D. thesis (2004) devotes considerable space to the subject within a Hindustani field of production, documenting the creative strategies by which low-status accompanists succeeded in becoming soloists on concert stages. While I have benefited substantially from these complementary approaches—ranging from anthropological to historical musicological perspectives—both are limited to the domain of northern elite music.[7] While for the most part classical musicians did not hold positions of high status, it is helpful to draw a distinction between musicians who are traditionally associated with exclusive elite performance occasions in neo-feudal productive arrangements, and hereditary professional ritual musicians who are excluded from such privileged spaces, though they are equally enmeshed in feudal relations. With the exception of Sherinian's work on former Dalit Christians in Tamil Nadu (1998), Babiracki's research on Adivasi communities in Jharkhand (2000), and Guillebaud's study of Dalit Hindu performing castes in central Kerala, most research confronting Indian music materially and socially is concentrated on musicians associated with elite musical space. The case of hereditary professional women and their accompanists is probably the closest example of an exception, but even then, patrons were typically from the landed gentry, even enjoying considerable wealth and freedom prior to the social reform movement at the end of the nineteenth century (Post 1987; Qureshi 2001) . Thus even though some hereditary (light) classical musicians present an important subaltern perspective, their status was higher than Dalits who were subjected to some of the worst practices of untouchability (Jacob 2002).

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[7] Other key works on musicians and social status in general include Dan Neuman's pioneering work ([1980] 1990, 1981, 1985), Kippen (1988), Babiracki (2000), and Maciscewsky (2001) in North India, and Allen (1998), Sherinian (1998), Subramanian (2006), and Weidman (2006) in the southern states.

The Argument

This study argues that marginalized musicians in Indian society are far more adaptable, resilient, enterprising and mobile than commonly acknowledged in academic and government discourses. The evidence supporting this stance is drawn from examples of how Malayan are using hereditary musical assets to improve their familial reputations by resignifying their popular identification with music in India's burgeoning public sphere. Reaching for a multifarious set of theoretical tools united in their commitment to engaging the social materially, I put forward a theory of Malayan musical production as a way of providing an explanation for two overlapping questions: Against the historical and contemporary backdrop of post-Independence neo-feudal, communist, and capitalist Kerala, how do Malayan mobilize their hereditary musical sensibilities to: 1) participate in diverse fields and productive arrangements that span a remarkable range of South Asian idioms?; and 2) achieve higher status in the public sphere by either ethnicizing (maintaining) or de-ethnicizing (subtilizing) caste boundaries to maximize opportunities for accumulating capital (economic and cultural) through social interaction?

Ethnographic case studies in South Asia have shown that individuals emphasize or de-emphasize caste affiliations depending on the situation, relationships involved, and potential benefits or disadvantages. Yet, most research on the ethnicization of caste is concerned with mass movements organized around human rights, liberation theology, caste associations, political parties, and communal conflicts. Moreover, studies exploring instances where caste is de-emphasized for strategic purposes also tend to adopt a communal approach, often following Srinivas' concept of Sanskritization (1952), the process by which communities try to escape negative stigmas through upward mobility by emulating high caste ritual and cultural practices. In both paradigms (ethnicization and Sanskritization), social mobility is treated as a communal initiative in which individual case studies merely serve to confirm wider trajectories and ambitions pursued at the group level, either by amplifying existing caste identities, as in Dumont's theory of *substantialisation* and the more recent concept of ethnicization, or by reinventing caste identities altogether through Sanskritization.

My conversations with Malayan consultants and experiences learning about their musical lives suggest that neither the ethnicization nor the Sanskritization approaches adequately capture the dynamics of social mobility on the ground. Accordingly, I agree with Béteille's argument that research on social mobility should concentrate less on caste and more on family, both in its nuclear and extended forms, since considerable evidence indicates that it is the most important locus of change in contemporary Indian society (1995). Going further, I would add that the family provides a more productive site for exploring issues related to selfhood across private and public spheres of interaction within the framework of continuing relevance of caste identities. Béteille's insight is particularly compelling if we consider the situation in Kerala where communism and social justice movements have consistently militated against public expressions of caste affiliations. With the exception of a few numerically dominant communities (Osella and Osella 2001), disadvantaged castes emphasize secular political affiliations[8] rather than ethnicized caste identities. Social mobility among SC (scheduled caste) communities in

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[8] In the past decade there has been a rise in participation in Hindu fundamentalist groups, including the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), in which caste identities have a more prominent role. Nonetheless, as the last federal elections confirmed in 2004, in which the Communist Party of India (Marxist) took all but two seats in Kerala, de-emphasizing caste identities in public is still the rule.

Kerala, then, tends to be pursued on a familial and individual basis since the conditions enabling the politicization of caste are undermined by grassroots secular political loyalties and Party control over education, religious, and public institutions (Pradeep 2002). That being said, beneath the prominence of religious and political boundaries in Kerala, caste remains an important component of identity, regularly ethnicized or de-ethnicized in daily life to make a living, obtain government benefits, or cultural recognition.

The continuity of Malayan caste identity is largely achieved through endogamy and versatile mobilization of artistic and ritual caste knowledge to earn livelihoods and improve the musical reputation of their families. Centuries of performing hereditary occupations as traditional healers, midwives, and teyyam spirit-medium specialists led to the oral cultivation of an acute sense of musicality through singing, dancing, drumming, and playing wind instruments, in addition to extraordinary skills in visual arts.[9] Although demand for their hereditary occupations has declined steadily since the impact of modernizing forces beginning in the colonial period, particularly with the establishment of Western health, judicial, and education institutions, there is a shared commitment to finding new respectable currency for the expressive craftsmanship associated with these traditional professions. As a result, families have much at stake in the struggle to earn livelihoods and dignify their musical heritage, which explains why so many individuals are now bridging discrete fields of cultural production created in the wake of Kerala's regional engagements with neo-feudalism, nationalism, communism, and global capitalism. From the revival of teyyam patronage by temple committees and affluent families, to the explosive arena of Kerala's political culture, the disciplined settings of decentralised (Karnatic) classical music training, and the theatrical stages of regional tourism venues and global cosmopolitan cities—Malayan musicians are performing well beyond the stylistic, textual, functional, and socio-economic boundaries of a musical heritage pejoratively described by early ethnographers as untouchable "devil dancing" (Thurston 1909) and more recently classified by national and regional cultural agencies under the rubric "ritual folk music" (A.K. Nambiar 1999). In response to opportunities created by alternative Indian modernities, individuals are drawing from a range of positionings, some complementary and others contradictory, to formulate musical selves capable of skilfully negotiating between overlapping roles defined by ritual service, political activism, classical pedagogy, and national and international artistry. Their stories articulate an important perspective in the emergent discourse dedicated to rethinking rigid stereotypical portrayals of Indian ritual specialists from low status artisan/performing communities as conservative and unenterprising (Inglis forthcoming).

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[9] Unless otherwise specified, my use of the term, "art," follows Neuman's (1981) approach to hereditary musical professions as lineage trades or crafts. This point of view emphasizes art as a productive creative human activity in contrast with its more recent, specific meaning associated with the development of aesthetics paralleling industrialization and the rise of the bourgeoisie as patrons and owners of art objects in the nineteenth century. See Raymond Williams' discussion in *Culture and Society* ([1958] 1993).

Methodology

The methods employed for this study were mainly ethnographic in orientation following an inductive process of describing social interaction in daily life as well as inviting opinions, explanations, and stories from a variety of consultants. Over a sixteen-month period of fieldwork, participant observation was conducted in local settings, at Malayan homes, life-cycle occasions related to marriages and deaths, religious festivals where teyyam is performed, tea shops, hotels (restaurants), education and cultural institutes. Due to the micro and macro dimensions of the themes of labour and mobility, the project was necessarily multisited in scope in order to trace the movement of individuals beyond local contexts to regional capitals and cosmopolitan global cities where they worked. General conclusions drawn from ethnographies centred exclusively on single locales have lost their explanatory force in the context of a global capitalist system characterized by unprecedented flows of people, information, and goods (Appadurai 1996; Burawoy 2000; Inda and Rosaldo 2002). My response to Marcus' challenge "…to capture distinctive identity formations in all their migrations and dispersions" (1998: 63), was to follow the temporal and spatial contours of musical lives. This involved abandoning conventional geographical centres, for example the archetypal village in traditional Indian ethnography, to find out about the connections across widely separated locales and diverse senses of place. As part of this project, other sites outside the religious and family spheres of rural Malabar included private and public tourism agencies, the ministry of tourism, education and cultural institutes, cultural festivals, and performing arts venues in Kerala and abroad.

Among the individuals who shared their ideas about topics explored in the research were men, women, and children from different socio-economic backgrounds within the Malayan community, prominent cultural and academic figures, musicians from other caste/communities, administrators, educators and festival organizers, domestic audiences, as well as foreign cultural intermediaries and audiences. In addition to informal conversations and transcripts of semi-structured interviews and oral histories, I kept notes of my observations in the course of my participation in social events. The materials gathered or reviewed range from audio and video recording media, still photographs, jottings, kinship and genealogical charts, maps, and promotional pamphlets, festival programmes, to commercially available recordings, as well as newspapers, magazines, conference presentations, and unpublished MPHIL and Ph.D. theses.

An important experiential component in the methodology involved a short period of apprenticeship during which time I took regular music lessons aimed at learning the basis of *ceṇṭa* playing out of a Malayan musical family's home. Besides facilitating access to the private space of a home environment as a guest and student, the music lesson established a flexible yet formal occasion for learning about Malayan musicality and material culture. Through these sessions I developed an appreciation for the interdependent aesthetic, functional, symbolic, creative, and physical demands and expertise that define what it means to labour musically mainly, although not exclusively, from a male Malayan perspective. In addition to gaining insider knowledge about the concepts of rhythm, improvisation, and form that situate this percussion idiom within broader Indian musical frames of reference, I learned about distinctive musical roles, leadership, codes of interaction, priorities and expectations that have shaped a distinct tradition as a vehicle for ritual service. Furthermore, by positioning myself as a student in a *guru-śiṣyan* relationship, I observed the protocols regulating the transmission of musical knowledge orally; at the same time, I secured the endorsement of my project by respected insiders working in the field who then played a key role in helping me gain acceptance and credibility later on among others in the community at ritual performance arenas. Certainly without these key friendships many privileged opportunities and insights would not have materialized in an environment where roles are clearly defined according to neo-feudal relations characterized by considerable tension between performers and higher caste sponsors. Indeed, oscillating between patron and performer spaces proved to be one of the most difficult challenges in the field, as there is virtually no intermingling between the two groups, and authorization from both sides is crucial to mitigating legitimate concerns and minimizing potential for misunderstandings and conflict. Having relationships already established in the performer camp prior to a ritual event consistently made this task more manageable.

Thesis Roadmap

The body of the dissertation is divided into five chapters. Broadly speaking, my line of inquiry proceeds inductively, through an interpretive process committed to building a multi-dimensional approach to situating the Malayan and their hereditary musicality. The first three chapters are navigations through a dense ethnographic undergrowth using salient conceptual categories furnished by consultants in the field, as well as from agents of their representation in the past and present. As the layers unfold, the socio-historical complexity gradually forms a substantive body of knowledge in need of theoretical moorings, to distil the significance of the positionings, stories, conversations, lived realities and relations that participant-observation experience amasses. At this point, I reach for a multifarious, yet focussed, set of theoretical tools in the language of scholarship, to provide a way of making sense of the particular for comparative points of reference. The dissertation then shifts registers again, moving forward to focus the theoretical lens on three scenes of Malayan modern practice.

Chapter one establishes the scope of Malayan identity, tracing its hereditary basis in feudal rights and responsibilities and the manner in which these social relations are mapped spatially according to a specifically Malayan geographical orientation. Section A also describes how this feudal identity is enacted through a ritual performance at sacred shrines during teyyam spirit-medium ceremonies. A shorter section B outlines newer dimensions of Malayan identity against the modern background of Kerala's unique political and socio-cultural environment. Moving away from Malayan categories of experience and self, chapter two explores the representational practices that Others have used to construct a particular image of Malayan in popular consciousness. Next, I adopt a reflexive mode in order to situate my own representational standpoint within the larger synchronic and diachronic contours of the discourse. I narrate how I arrived at the topic, followed by a discussion of three methodological problems encountered in the field, ending with a brief autobiographical note.

The purpose of chapter three is to show how music is embedded in Malayan senses of self and how it serves as a distinctive boundary marker from the point of view of outsiders. I demonstrate in concrete terms the malleable body of hereditary tools that enable the Malayan to successfully adapt to other genres within a larger South Asian musical frame of reference. First, I briefly discuss the discourse on origins of hereditary musicality, including mythical, social, and biological accounts. Section B then focuses on describing the musical parameters and repertoire that characterize Malayan musical sensibilities, from the prominence of voice and oratory, to principles of rhythm, technique involved in ceṇṭa playing, to key aspects of Malayan aesthetics. Shifting the focus away from sound idioms and onto the producers, I then outline how the hereditary knowledge is transmitted from one generation to the next. The chapter concludes with a critical review of selected literature informing the interpretive approach I bring to the domain of music and performance.

In chapter four, I outline the theoretical perspectives that underpin the model I propose for engaging Malayan socio-musical mobility. Starting with a discussion of the concept of music as labour and its importance for the mobility question, I then draw on aspects of Marx's theory of capital that I feel are heuristically relevant to the questions raised by the ethnography. I review key works within the general scope of Marxism and then explore more specific applications of Marxist concepts to case studies of musicians, contrasting the strengths and weaknesses of various approaches. In section C of the chapter, I discuss the limitations and continuing relevance of Pierre Bourdieu's work, clarifying my use of some of his key concepts. The second part of the section focuses on explaining why Nan Lin's recent theory of social capital complements Bourdieu's apparatus and consolidates my thinking. Lastly, I present a diagram illustrating my model for explaining the interplay between Malayan agency and fields of musical production in terms of socio-musical mobility.

Having steered the ethnographic course towards an outline for a theory of socio-musical mobility, chapter five fleshes out the argument with primary evidence from case studies. Section A explores how a Malayan predisposition towards mastering classical music is contributing to a higher social and economic status for the community, as they take on the role as teachers of higher caste students. Then, in section B, I draw on ethnohistorical evidence in the form of oral histories to examine the intersection of party politics and Malayan musicality from the perspective of two branches of a joint-family lineage. The section demonstrates how Kerala's post-Independence grassroots political activities opened up new arenas for applying hereditary musicality. Finally, section C foregrounds the involvement of one Malayan musician in the arena of tourism, namely a global circuit of arts festivals held at prestigious venues in cosmopolitan cities of affluent countries. It explores the changes in social identity that performers experience in the process of recontextualizing ritual service on stage as a form of artistry. Collectively, these stories are the substantial basis for arguing that Malayan families are adapting their musical heritage flexibly for participation in new venues and relations of patronage in pursuit of a dual aim: to enhance their reputations as musical specialists and earn a better living.

CHAPTER 1

BEING MALAYAN THEN AND NOW

The purpose of this chapter is to introduce the Malayan caste-community in their terms against the backdrop of shifting historical contexts in northern Kerala, the region of Malabar. Adopting a people-centred focus from the outset, I present the Malayan as the principal musical agents of this story, though ultimately the perspective and authorial strategy is mine. However, by underscoring the categories and representational priorities that surfaced through our conversations I hope to create a general picture of how the Malayan situate themselves.

I begin by establishing the Malayan as a community of musicians who use hereditary assets to gain socio-economic advantages in different productive settings. This sets up a lens for interpreting the significance of the ethnographic portraits and observations that support the rationale for studying socio-musical mobility in their community. Focussing on musicians' lives, with music as a secondary investigative concern, invites scrutiny of what Geertz termed the hard surfaces of life—"the political, economic, and stratificatory realities..." in which people explore different positionings within contextual limitations (1973:30). At the same time, person-centred research also takes us underneath those surfaces to listen to what it means to be a Malayan musician according to their narratives of lived experience. The discussion then widens in section B, moving from the people to the social structures, ideological and historical settings that shape the horizon of possibilities for positioning oneself as a Malayan musician. Each of the hard surfaces of feudalism, colonialism, communism, and globalization comes into focus in the course of presenting different understandings of their community.

A. Contemporary Neo-Feudal Social Relations and Orientations

> *Kaṇṇēṟupāṭṭŭ [ritual singing event for curing the evil-eye] is sung as a remedy for the evil-eye [kaṇṇēṟŭ].... It [the ritual] is connected with Lord Paramashivan. It is said that he was the creator of the Malayan*

> *community. There is a relation between that and this kaṇṇēṟupāṭṭŭ. Paramashivan's evil-eye afflicted himself. In order to remove the negative effect caused by his own evil-eye, Shivan created the Malayan community. The myth is told like that. So there is a close connection between kaṇṇēṟupāṭṭŭ and the Malaya community: it is the removal of the effects of the evil-eye. But it [the ritual of kaṇṇēṟupāṭṭŭ] can't be held by common people. It is too expensive. In the past, only the rich Nambūtiris and their people could conduct it due to the large expense. It would last up to one week... this kaṇṇēṟupāṭṭŭ and all that. (Suresh Panikkar, March 2004, Kunnaru)*

Explaining the significance of the Malayan ritual *kaṇṇēṟupāṭṭŭ*, the respected spirit-medium performer Suresh Panikkar points to how musicality and healing play a generative role in defining what it means to belong to the Malayan—an ex-untouchable Dalit caste of Hindu hereditary ritual specialists primarily inhabiting the northern districts of Malabar. In addition to the social cohesion created by restricting the exchange of sons and daughters for marriage to within the caste, the Malayan form a community on the basis of shared occupational knowledge rooted in the services their ancestors provided from pre-colonial times under a feudal social arrangement (Miller 1954; Gough 1961; Fuller 1976; Menon 1994; Narayanan 2003). At the top of the social hierarchy were the non-producing landowning castes of Samantans (*Kshatriyas*) and Nambūtiri Brahmin priests, followed by the local matrilineal Nayar chieftains who maintained the social order, regulated agricultural production on the lands they controlled, and provided military services to local *rajas* (king) when needed. Beneath the Nayars were the numerically dominant cultivating caste of Tiyyas, followed by a range of higher and lower ranked service castes. Establishing themselves early as traders along the Malabar coast, Christians and Muslims were the traditional merchant communities in Kerala. Finally, Pulayan agricultural labourers occupied the lowest position in society. The Malayan were among the lower ranked service providers considered to be untouchable by high-caste patrons.

Until the early decades of the twentieth century, a severe practice of distance pollution regulated interaction between groups based on relative degrees of purity and pollution associated with each caste (Miller 1954:413; Thulaseedharan 1977:20).[10] The lower the rank within a hierarchical scheme legitimized by powerful Brahminical religious authority, the higher the level of pollution and the further the spatial distance that had to be maintained from higher ranking castes. Writing in 1900, Fawcett reports that the Malayan must remain 64 paces away from a Nambūtiri Brahmin ([1900] 2001:59); only the Pulayan were to keep a greater distance at 96 paces. Malayan were among the highly polluting castes due to their occupational role as removers of pollution—tangible and intangible—from higher caste homes. Specifically, these occupations can be divided into three categories: 1) performing annual spirit-medium ceremonies called *teyyam* at village and family shrines in between agrarian cycles to restore prosperity, social, and physical well-being, 2) performing rituals that involve *mantravādam* (occult healing practices), including kaṇṇēṟupāṭṭŭ, to cure or protect against psychological and physical illnesses attributed to social and supernatural forces; the evil-eye is a common affliction Malayan treat with their expertise in this area, and 3) delivering babies in the role of village midwives (women only).

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[10] See Kinsley (1993 [1982]:88) for a good summary of the doctrine of purity and pollution in Hinduism.

Musical performance has always played a role in the services Malayan provide, but chanting, singing, playing instruments, and dancing are particularly important in the ritual arena of teyyam. As one of three main castes of teyyam performers, the Malayan have the hereditary right and duty to act as custodians for local and pan-Hindu Gods and Goddesses propitiated annually at the shrines and sacred groves where the deities reside in non-anthropomorphic objects, typically a weapon of some kind. In addition to ritual uses of sound and movement, performers create stunning visual and theatrical displays that require exceptional artistic skill; they also execute ritual procedures with highly sophisticated knowledge of sacred rites, materials, and order. While all teyyam performing castes know about the ritual structures and visual arts specific to the deities attached to their respective communities, only the Malayan are recognized for being superior in their musical abilities and therefore consistently capable of performing all aspects of the ritual for deities under their custodianship. Thus although the songs and chants specific to the deity are always sung by the caste holding the hereditary right, Malayan are usually needed to drum and play a double-reed wind instrument called the *kurum kuḻal*.

Moreover, unlike other teyyam performing castes, Malayan women traditionally sang along with the men in the process of reinforcing the presence of the spirit in the human medium (Kurup [1973] 2000:52; Thurston [1909] 1975:439). Today, with the exception of older generations, women no longer participate in ritual arenas like they did in the past, but the community remains committed to training their daughters in music and dance; to accomplish this they are increasingly turning to the national cultural space of high-status South Indian classical (Karnatic) music lessons. This pattern of shifting musical expertise to new musical fields of production has enabled Malayan men and women to participate successfully in several non-hereditary music venues, including orchestra programmes for festivals, the Indian military, weddings, political rallies, and tourism spectacles. Although women are increasingly positioning themselves on the periphery in ritual settings, they inherit musicality in the private space of the home or through institutionalized learning occasions in schools.

Still, even as new forms of patronage expand opportunities to earn economic and cultural capital, hereditary ritual service remains the principal source of legitimacy for Malayan musicality and this is predominantly a male domain. As the most popular form of worship among Hindus in northern Malabar,[11] teyyam in particular provides the most important context for cultivating the efficacy of musical acts as a catalyst for improving and promoting social and individual well-being.

But teyyam also reproduces neo-feudal hierarchical relations and revives painful collective memories of servitude and dominance. The situation is ambivalent: On one hand Malayan musical status is legitimized through hereditary neo-feudal titles; on the other, modern venues are presenting new opportunities for establishing musical reputations that are not explicitly founded on caste identity, though knowledge of hereditary ritual music practices indirectly contributes to Malayan learning curves in the process of mastering new musical idioms. Accordingly, even as knowledge about music and healing provides an important tool Malayan use to help create a better world around them, it also serves to emphasize their historically marginal status in feudal Malabar. It is precisely due to the limitations for exercising agency within re-enactments of feudal social relations that many Malayan today use musical assets to earn a living and improve their musical reputation in non-hereditary settings where it is possible to dissolve caste affiliations by positioning oneself differently in the secular space of nationhood or urban cosmopolitanism. They also, however, continue to earn a livelihood in hereditary settings—the source of their original stamp of musical legitimacy and authority.

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[11] In contrast with the social exclusion that characterized Brahminical Hindu temple worship, teyyam has always been a popular religious practice, promoting symbiotic solidarity through inclusive inter-caste, albeit hierarchically graded, worship to address common concerns centring on village agrarian prosperity and general well-being (Menon 1994). Untouchable castes (including the Malayan) were denied access to Brahminical temples until 1924 when Gandhi led the Vaikom Satyagraha in southern Kerala and the maharaja of Travancore opened the temples to all Hindus.

The significance of Malayan musicality as an active form of agency in the expression of their caste identity links both strategies to the opening myth told by Suresh Panikkar. According to his and other accounts, the Malayan were created to cure an evil-eye afflicting Shiva—one of the most powerful Gods of the pan-Indian Vedic Hindu pantheon.[12] To accomplish this task the Malayan sang, and in doing so they anchored their collective identity in a mythical moment of powerful musicality and resistance. By weaving an origins story with the Hindu cosmology of higher castes, they contest the ex-untouchable stigma imposed on them by former landowning communities while also establishing a primordial source of musical authority. The result is this: ritual and mythical status combined with an enterprising outlook on the conversion potential and portability of their musical assets has increased their respectability as musicians in the places they call home in northern Malabar.

Yet clearly Malayan status as musical, occult, and healing experts cannot be solely attributed to collective and individual agency: Regional historical conditions specific to northern Kerala's feudal, colonial, communist, and capitalist dynamics transformed the horizon of possibilities at the same time as Malayan musicians began exploring new positionings. The dissertation tells the story of this dialectical motion between agency and Malabar modernity, from neo-feudal ritual to global cosmopolitan cultural imaginaries. But before I turn to modern regional dynamics particular to Kerala, I interpret two neo-feudal terms the Malayan use to express who they are in relation to others in Malabar society, and then I describe the ritual practice and belief system called teyyam. The intent is to capture the complexity of Malayan modes of engaging musically with Kerala's alternative modernity while situating them as the primary agents within the argument and case studies ahead.

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[12] The other important Gods of the Hindu pantheon include: Shiva's consorts Parvati and Durga, and sons Ganesh and Murugan; Vishnu and his consort Lakshmi, and nine avatars (Krishna and Rama are the most well-known); and Brahma and his consort Sarasvati.

Avakāśam: A Hereditary Right and Duty

When Malayan talk about the hereditary professions they inherit from their father's side of the family they use the term *avakāśam* to describe an inalienable right granted to them by local rajas and landowning families in pre-colonial times. Under this arrangement, landowning families had a responsibility to provide in the form of grain, clothing, and subsistence plots of land for Malayan families in exchange for ritual and midwifery services. Constituting a hereditary bond of social interdependence between landed superior castes and their subordinates, the institution mirrors the pan-South Asian *jajmani* relations characteristic of Indian feudalism (Stern [1993] 2003:53). Though the Malayan are no longer remunerated through harvest shares in the aftermath of wide-reaching land reforms and new laws of inheritance that eroded the economic foundation of the position of Kerala landowners since Independence, grain and clothing are still presented in addition to money as a symbol of enduring patron-client hierarchical reciprocity (fig. 3).

The contract is therefore much more than an economic arrangement between producing and non-producing castes. Rather it is a moral and social bond inherited through successive generations wherein family honour and status is always at stake should respective responsibilities be unmet. A variation of this bond regulating relationships between landowning classes and agriculture and service castes exists in every region of South Asia. For example, in the north, Eglar's 1960 classic ethnography of a village in Punjab cogently summarizes a similar arrangement between Muslim landowning *zamindars* and *kammi* service castes in Pakistan called *seyp*:

> It is a matter of honour and dignity for both partners to maintain the long standing relationship. So the nature of the relationship between the *seypis* is not to be understood as a merely economic one in which services and payment are equated. It is a social and moral relationship whose obligations are felt by both parties—the *zamindar* and the *ghar da*

> *kammi*—who have developed close and lasting bonds that are not easily broken. (1960:35-6)

As in the Punjabi feudal context, the honour associated with performing one's avakāśam is a response to expectations established by societal norms and values. For Hindus, including ex-untouchable castes like the Malayan, there is added weight in the doctrine of *dharma*, or the practice of acting in accordance with ascribed caste-based roles and duties to uphold social and cosmic order (Fuller [1992] 2005:225).

In his article on the social structure of Malabar society, Miller confirms that the term *deśam avakāśam* stands for a more general hereditary claim within the village (*deśam*) network of reciprocal exchange in which every community has specific roles to play. Despite overemphasizing avakāśam as a privilege at the expense of the obligational meaning of the term, Miller accurately emphasizes the extent to which families protect their inheritance, stating: "Such rights are jealously guarded and an immigrant family will not be permitted to practise its traditional occupation without the approval of the family with the hereditary right" (1954:413). Defending the right to serve the village and the high-castes who control them is a way of providing for the family while upholding the honour of the ancestral lineage.[13]

So avakāśam is both a socio-economic and ancestral family matter. This raises an important point concerning multivalent use of the Malayalam term *taṟavāṭŭ* to refer to the joint family, the household, and the home in Kerala. The Malayalam word for family in the dictionary is *kuṭumbam*, but people often use the more inclusive term taṟavāṭŭ to situate themselves within a larger web of joint-family relations rooted in an ancestral home or property that may or may not constitute a household unit. While in the literature the concept of taṟavāṭŭ is more widely associated with high-caste Nayar matrilineal estates because of widespread anthropological interest in matrilineality (Arunima 2003; Fuller 1976; Gough 1961; Jeffery 1976, 1992), in my experience the term was commonly used by all castes to indicate their placed ancestral lineage. Presently, many joint families have established nuclear households and no longer inhabit the specific homes that anchor their lineages in the land, however, the taṟavāṭŭ remains a central self-identifying and self-orienting frame of reference.

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[13] Offering a comparative perspective from a South Indian case study in Tamil Nadu, Inglis's doctoral thesis on the Velar caste of potters discusses a similar occupational system regulated by heritable duties, rights, and honours to provide services, which in this context consists of pot making, image making, and healing, in exchange for protection and subsistence (1984:137-38).

The lived reality of a taṟavāṭŭ has significant implications for the way avakāśam compels its members to honour the reciprocal bonds established by their ancestors with patron taṟavāṭŭs and local deities. The presence of late (deceased) members are felt daily in the domestic space of every branch of an extended family, a condition strengthened by the custom of displaying garlanded photos prominently and by the belief in the return of ancestral spirits annually in the living form of crows during the Malayalam month of Karkkaṭakam (July-August). Houses in Malabar are more than the physical dwelling places where a nuclear or joint family resides; they are equal to kinship lineages that include the active presence of deceased members of the family, and thus a Malayan's avakāśam simultaneously points to obligations towards the spiritual world, their own ancestors as well as towards living elders, high caste patron taṟavāṭŭs, and the broader village community they are socially obligated and legitimized to serve.

A quintessential expression of the feudal social relations of production structuring jajmani relations in pre-colonial Malabar, the avakāśam was considered more valuable than property in earlier times. It was the primary means through which service-providing joint-families earned a living to reproduce and ensure the continuity of their taṟavāṭŭ's lineage. Because no concept of private ownership of land existed prior to its introduction by the British in the late-nineteenth century (Dirks 1987), people depended on the renewal of reciprocal ties through the exchange of gifts and the conferring and recognition of titles, which in practical terms meant honouring one's avakāśam. The importance of durable hereditary titles is highlighted by a definition offered in a recent edition of a Malayalam-English dictionary in which the term is explicitly linked to a concept of ownership—an *avakāśi* being an heir, claimant, rightful owner, or successor ([1999] 2003).

Today, what is owned is a right and responsibility to recreate an unequal relationship that affirms ascribed caste rankings while providing a sense of continuity with ancestral pasts and a measure of economic and ritual capital to help sustain a living in the present. Many Malayan continue to rely on remuneration from ritual services they perform in fulfillment of avakāśam; but many are also engaged in a wide range of labour activities to make ends meet. In fact, most young Malayan of the next generation are keen to find work in private or public sectors in Kerala or abroad to mitigate the extent to which they are dependent on hereditary occupational work that carries negative stigmas attached to ex-untouchable occupations. But if needed, the right is there and most Malayan continue to claim or honour it sufficiently enough to affirm their identity, respect their ancestors, conciliate the sacrificial demands of local deities, and absorb skilful hereditary resources.

To illustrate the significance of avakāśam in the context of everyday life, I remember a conversation I had with two young Malayan men. We were taking a break from a teyyam ritual late one evening in Chokli near the regional town of Thalassery at a small busy hotel near the former landowning taṟavāṭŭ that had organized the ritual. As we sipped our *chai* (sweet milky tea) and snacked on *paratas* (fried densely layered flat bread) with egg curry, one of the young Malayan musician asked me if I could look out for job prospects for him in Canada, to which I replied: "but you already have a job playing [music] for teyyam." He promptly corrected: "This isn't a job; this is avakāśam." Later he explained that he hoped to find work by joining one of the waves of migrant labourers that leave Kerala to do semi-skilled and unskilled labour in the Gulf, especially at Dubai in the United Arab Emirates.

The anecdote serves as a sobering reminder that although musical and ritual assets have potential to contribute to Malayan social mobility, they represent one option among many. Economic opportunities in the Gulf offer a more expedient strategy for pursuing higher status by exploiting the currency disparity that enables higher consumption of material goods at home in Kerala. As the Osellas thoroughly demonstrate in their research on modernity and identity among the ex-untouchable Izhava caste of southern Kerala, the use of economic capital earned abroad to consume durable and transient products as status markers and to patronize prestigious religious and political institutions is a promising pathway for pursuing social mobility in Kerala (Osella and Osella 2001; Kurien 2002). Unlike the Izhava, though, the Malayan do not have the population or influence to gain widespread access to the kind of social networks that facilitate large-scale migrant labour, and so avakāśam maintains its currency as a living source of sustenance and potential innovation.

Locating the Cerujanmam: A Malayan Social and Sacred Map

> *In earlier times there would be definite boundaries. During the days of kingly rule there would be an area with a boundary and it would be under the control of a person—a person like me, a person belonging to our community. I belong to the Malayan community. Therefore I have the right to perform tiras [teyyam] in the temples [kāvŭ] that come within this area. This was the practice under kingly rule. It was called cerujanmam.* (Jitesh, Kathirur, June 24, 2004)

> People don't just dwell in comfort or misery, in centers or margins, in place or out of place, empowered or disempowered. People everywhere act on the integrity of their dwelling. (Basso and Feld 1996:11)

Studying the way people live in places facilitates critical exploration of a wide range of experience that teaches how people make sense of their social and material world. In globalization discourses, postmodern preoccupation with disjuncture, fragmentation, and dislocation has only reinforced the need to study down and tease out the complexity and fluidity of spatial territorial orientations: to uncover how "perceptions of locality and community are discursively and historically constructed" (Gupta and Ferguson 1997:6). Person-centred approaches to place in particular encourage a way of tuning into how people use their worldview to position themselves within changing landscapes of identity, or as Basso and Feld put it—"integrities of dwelling." In South Indian contexts, as in many places around the world, there are significant gaps between relatively recent ways of living in places in response to modern institutions developed under colonialism, nationalism, and open economies, and ways rooted in a continuity with spatial orientations predating these reorienting forces.

Daniel's important person-centred study of Tamil selfhood perfectly illustrates the coexistence of remarkably different territorial orientations in the small South Indian village where he conducted fieldwork (1984). In his discussion of Tamil perceptions of boundaries based on map-drawing exercises with consultants he distinguishes between precise demarcation of the administrative *kiraman*, mapped with contiguous lines forming an enclosed area, and the more fluid pre-colonial orientation of the *ur* whereby linear boundaries are irrelevant. In contrast with the circumscribed political kiraman, the ur is conceived as an opposition between a village centre and the outer limits of its frontier. When asked to be shown the boundaries of the ur, consultants brought Daniel to the shrines where sentinel guardian deities watch over the influx of people whose bodily substance is not compatible with local soil at vulnerable points of entry, including intersecting roads and waterways (ibid.:78). Unlike state-instituted boundaries enclosing places for the purposes of taxation and political administration, his work demonstrates how shrines mark a distinctive territorial orientation closer to an indigenous Tamil cultural landscape.

Paralleling Daniel's case study, my findings on perceptions of boundaries in Malabar uncovered similar distinctions. Consultants in the field regularly expressed spatial orientations foregrounding shrines of deities who protect the well-being of people inhabiting a centre as separate from panchayat village administrative divisions. However, significant regional-geographical factors have shaped person-centred definitions of place in Malabar in ways that differ from the rest of Kerala, or South India for that matter. Moreover, complimenting Daniel's semiotic perspective, the Malayan case study confronts unequal power relations where ascription to a particular caste ranked under a pre-colonial hierarchical outlook also influences how people position themselves while dwelling in places. The Malayan spatial concept at the centre of my discussion of the territorial orientation is called the *ceṟujanmam*, or "little kingdom by birth." But first it is necessary to consider how the rugged geography in Malabar shaped indigenous senses of place in ways that are significant for the task of historicizing how Malayan have taken advantage of opportunities to reposition themselves locally.

One of the main points of contrast when comparing popular Hinduism in northern Malabar and the rest of Kerala is the extent to which sacred power is decentralized in the northern territory compared with the consolidation of power around high-caste Brahminical temple centres in the south. While there are important Brahminical temples for the exclusive worship of high-caste pan-Hindu Gods (mainly Shiva) in northern Malabar, they are relatively few compared to the highly diffuse network of non-Brahminical low-caste sacred groves and small temples dedicated to local Gods, heroic ancestors, and versions of a mother Goddess or *Bhagavati*. The reason for the lack of high-caste temple-centres in Malabar is largely geographical: unlike the wider southern plains, the northern terrain is more rugged and hilly and was therefore unsuitable for wide-scale cultivation of paddy (rice), the primary source of surplus wealth and agrarian economic power for temple centres in south Indian kingdoms (Stein [1980] 1999; Appadurai 1981; Ludden 1985). When the Nambūtiri Brahmins first came to Kerala, "it was on the fertile plains rather than on the hilly regions or coastal tracks that settlement took place" (Velutat 1976; Namboodiri 1999). This explains why northern Malabar has sustained inclusive modes of communal worship organized around local Gods and Goddesses with origins in a Dravidian (pre-Aryan/Brahmin) belief system largely independent of the authority of Brahmin priests (Kurup [1973] 2000; Freeman 1991).

Religious power in the extreme northern region of Kerala is less concentrated in temple centres and therefore people in Northern Malabar experience the sacred landscape differently from their southern counterparts. For Malayan custodians of non-Brahminical Gods and Goddesses that inhabit local worship sites, authority over teyyam spirit-medium ceremonies meant greater prestige due to their role in the inner circle of service providers (Menon 1994). The prestige stems from the fact that non-Brahmin landowning families were both active believers in the local religious belief system and principal patrons of the annual teyyam festival. Menon's important study of the history of the region confirms that some service castes worked in close proximity to high-caste families despite the institution of distance pollution because of the occupational roles they performed and the religious belief system they shared. Regrettably, he describes the Malayan as a hill tribe on the fringe (ibid.:54) and mistakenly overlooks the vital service they provided in delivering babies, treating afflictions of the evil-eye and other illnesses, and calling powerful local deities into their bodies annually to facilitate direct communal worship. The prestige garnered through this unique relationship with non-Brahminical landowning families shaped how Malayan orient themselves spatially and socially on the land. Their unique sense of place is captured by the term they invoke to describe the territory within which they hold the avakāśam to provide ritual services—the ceṟujanmam.

Literally meaning "little kingdom" from the Malayalam word *ceṟu* (little) and *janmam* (property or birthright), the ceṟujanmam refers to the spatial authority Malayan and other ritual service providers exercise over the mediumship of local deities residing in a network of village and private temple shrines. According to oral tradition, local rajas originally divided the ritual responsibilities within their kingdoms between Malayan family lineages, thereby bestowing rights for each joint-family to provide teyyam, mantravādam, and midwifery services for designated high-caste taṟavāṭũs. The ceṟujanmam thus evokes the anchoring of avakāśam bonds in the land—or the embeddedness of hierarchical social ties between ancestral family lineages. Although vague references to boundaries coinciding with waterways were offered by consultants in the field, when I requested to visit the boundaries of their ceṟujanmam they showed me important sacred sites attached to taṟavāṭũs that fell within the spatial ritual authority of their family. The cleavage between my notion of what constitutes a boundary marker and the importance they attributed to sacred sites and social bonds of reciprocity underlines the discrepancy between Western senses of place informed by private property rights and Malayan interaction with the landscape as a network of sites embodying neo-feudal social ties and supernatural power.[14] The ceṟujanmam is not a bounded geographical area, but rather a network of socio-sacred sites where people come together to worship, legitimize status, and renew interdependent relationships between families.

The indeterminate boundaries that characterize the Malayan concept of the ceṟujanmam can also be traced to the lower position Malayan occupied within the neo-feudal social hierarchy (active today in theory though less in practice). Unlike high-caste landowning families, Malayan did not have the power to control large territories marked by geographical features of the land. The only power over place they exercised was in the religious arena of spirit mediumship at specific sites inhabited by divine agencies, and even then only within the temporal restrictions regulated by a cycle of specific dates in the Malayalam calendar.[15] As ritual specialists possessing essential knowledge and skills required to protect the well-being of a community of worship, the places which are most important to the Malayan are therefore the ones where they have always risen above an otherwise stigmatized status as ex-untouchables.

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[14] The gap between my sense of place and the Malayan's was narrowed as soon as I followed Ingold's example to explore ways of living in place as opposed to ways of looking at place (Ingold 1993).

[15] Keralites follow a solar calendar divided into 12 months named after constellations. The New Year begins with the month of Chingam (Leo) around the end of August or early September in the Gregorian calendar.

Drawing from her research among the Lumbee First Peoples living in North Carolina, Blu eloquently summarizes the strategic possibilities for resistance from the margins in territorial power relations: "In a situation of unequal power and wealth, of unequal ability to control or affect the landscape, the unseen, the unmarked became a source of potential strength and resistance, and empowering counter construction" (Blu 1996:218). Under the feudal caste system in Malabar, Malayan did not live in a land of wide-ranging territorial boundaries marked by features of the natural landscape. They were prohibited from using most pathways that facilitated movement across the larger territories ruled and policed by high castes on behalf of local rajas (Miller 1954). And yet movement was permitted between socio-sacred sites within networks specific to each family constituting their ceṟujanmam. Because of the power that ancestors mediated at these religious shrines, the spatial concept continues to provide a Malayan blueprint for orienting themselves on the land. It serves as a map for honouring avakāśam through ritual services and as a repository for remembering a privileged dimension of their relationship with the land at a time when the scope for mobility and control over territory was brutally restricted through practices of untouchability and even unseeability.

The ceṟujanmam is the spatial orientation according to which Malayan act on the integrity of their historically distinctive way of dwelling in Malabar socio-cultural geographies. But how is this birthright organized socially and politically inside the community? Authority over the ceṟujanmam is the responsibility of the eldest (usually male) member of a joint-family lineage. Formally recognized by the honorific *janmari* (owner of a birthright with territorial connections), this person inherits the right to oversee the fulfilment of hereditary duties as leader of the Malayan family of a given ceṟujanmam (fig. 4). Jitesh, a well-known performer from Kathirur, further explains:

> *Each family had to do the work coming within their specified area. The same goes for janmaris at other places too. ... The people of our community who have the ceṟujanmam rights are called janmaris. A person would normally be identified by this name.*

The main focus of this part of the interview is on links between the ceṟujanmam and teyyam, a predominantly male domain of hereditary experience. However, Jitesh goes on to explain how the same authority vested in the position of janmari regulated midwifery services prior to the establishment of hospitals and allopathic treatment.

> *This was the practice in olden days. Now such things are not there. It would be the janmaris wife or some other woman belonging to that place who would look after the delivery. It is only now that people go to the gynaecologist for help. Earlier the practice was different. They were generally known as pēṯṯicci, meaning the person who took the child. So, this was done by the women of our community, irrespective of whether the child was of a king or of a person of low birth, it was our women who took the responsibility at that time. The caste system was very strong. You might be knowing about this. (Jitesh, June 24, 2004, Kathirur)*

Midwifery is no longer a widely practised service that janmaris take responsibility for, but teyyam worship continues to provide an important religious experience among Hindus in North Malabar. As a result, his position, authority, and geography remain influential in Malayan senses of place. It is still the janmari's job to meet with the patrons of a teyyam festival event, raise any concerns on behalf of his community, designate who will perform specific roles in the ritual process, ensure the participation of enough members of the community to successfully cover all aspects of the ceremony, and redistribute the gifts and payment upon completion of a festival. In the event that a janmari is not capable of performing these duties due to illness or absence, the responsibility falls on the next most experienced male kin member of the joint-family, usually a nephew or son. If a performer from a neighbouring ceṟujanmam wishes to participate in a teyyam ritual event, he must first obtain the permission of the janmari in the area; the same goes for a patron who wishes to invite a performer from outside the hereditary jurisdiction of the Malayan janmari holding the title to provide ritual services for that patron's taṟavāṭŭ.

If avakāśam constitutes a key self-identifying category in Malayan social imaginaries, the ceṟujanmam anchors it—with all its baggage of inequities and privileges—in the cultural landscape of northern Malabar. It is a socio-sacred map, one of many tools transmitted orally through generations for the dual purpose of retelling Malayan past while providing a context to build on for the future (Palmer 2005). The second point will be key for situating the Malayan in the discourse of alternative modernities later on.

An instructive comparison with the Malayan case is a recent article about how low-caste potter families are repositioning themselves more respectably in a cluster of Sri Lankan villages by responding to extra-local demand for terra cotta pottery (Winslow 2002). Their story brings the discussion of the ceṟujanmam and avakāśam to a fitting close while equally serving as a springboard for an overview of the teyyam ritual practices currently offering the best hereditary potential for mobilizing musicality to improve their social standing. Like the potters, Malayan are "... actively, even confidently, seeking out ways to transform and improve the contexts they inherited" (ibid.:169). They use musical and ritual knowledge transmitted through hereditary milieus like teyyam spirit-medium worship to produce services of value to others outside of their conventional socio-economic arrangement and territorial orientation.

At the same time as Malayan persist in providing services in social spaces that recreate neo-feudal relations of superiority and inferiority, they are traversing domestic and global markets by entering the flows of people and culture that Appadurai famously coined "scapes" (1996). Their situation mirrors that of the potters who continue to sell pottery at local markets and door-to-door where they have less scope for shedding the stigma of inferior status, even as the community's economic status has improved markedly through participation in extra-local markets. Due to a combination of the market scale for their tangible wares, the historical conditions that changed the economic landscape, and the greater time period (beginning in the early 1950s) over which this transition has evolved—they appear to be more successful than the Malayan at this point. But if the growing awareness of artistic skills associated with teyyam in domestic and foreign touristic borderzones (Bruner 2005) and national artistic venues is any indication, the Malayan too, appear to be rapidly "changing the landscape of their identity" (Winslow 2002:167).

Teyyam Custodians of the Divine

Teyyam spirit-mediumship is the most resilient and adaptive of Malayan occupational services performed today. The ritual's vitality is reflected in the term's symbolic capacity to condense widely disparate—even contradictory—meanings (Turner 1967), thereby discouraging attempts to define or classify it simplistically. In chapter three I explore how the efficacious use of sound in conjunction with other olfactory, tactile, and visual stimulants makes the incarnation of a spirit in a human medium possible. The purpose of this section is to introduce the socio-religious setting in which this occurs. Recognized as possessing the exceptional capabilities in musical performance among performing communities in the field of teyyam, the Malayan stand out for their remarkable capacity to imbue sound with agency and so it is their role and perspective in teyyam that is of primary concern here. But before introducing how sounds mesh with action in the course of the ritual, it is useful to present a brief overview of this popular Hindu form of worship.

Etymologically, the word *teyyam* is a derivative of the Sanskrit term *daivam*, meaning god (Kurup 1977:5). Its first meaning, therefore, evokes the concretized presence of a deity in an elaborately adorned human body-medium. Highlighting the prominence of sound and movement is a variation of teyyam called *teyyāṭṭam*, meaning dance of the gods, from the attached Dravidian suffix *āṭṭam* (dance). Moreover, the annual agrarian festival framing the ritual is often referred to as *kaliyāṭṭam*, from *kalikkuka*, the Malayalam word for play, thereby translating as "the playful dance of the Gods." Yet another word for teyyam more common in the southern districts of Malabar is *tiṟayāṭṭam am* from *taṟa*, a raised concrete or brick platform serving as the place (*stanam*) or altar of the divine and situated in the kāvŭ according to the specific cardinal direction associated with the particular deity in question. The teyyams dance on this and animal sacrifices are sometimes offered at this site. Unless use of a term appears in an oral account or it is required for contextual clarification, I use teyyam elastically throughout to encompass all of the above meanings, relying on the situation to bring specific uses into focus.

There are primarily four ways in which teyyam surfaces in everyday speech. The term variously refers to: 1) a deity, including manifestations of male or female pan-Hindu high-caste Gods, local versions of the Mother Goddess (known as *Bhagavati*) common throughout India, or a heroic or tragic legendary figure who was deified following an extraordinary mortal life; 2) a set of ritual actions with the substantive goal of establishing divine presence in a human medium at non-Brahminical shrines; 3) a festival event occurring between rice harvests and regulated by agrarian cycles according to the Malayalam calendar during which the performance of spirit-mediumship is the centrepiece; and 4) a popular Hindu belief system shared by an inter-caste community of worship in which each group participates according to prescribed roles for their caste. In addition to these common uses, from a Malayan standpoint, teyyam is avakāśam in practice—spatially grounded in the constellation of sites forming the contours of a performing family's ceṟujanmam in which they serve as custodians for the divine.

The main goal of the event is to establish divine presence in a human male medium in order to facilitate verbal communication between teyyams and devotees. This conversational aspect makes teyyam distinct from the Brahminical Hindu temple practice of adorning statues of Vedic Gods and Goddesses for worship through a form of auspicious seeing called *darśan*. Eck describes the Hindu significance of seeing in these formerly exclusive high-caste interior spaces: "Beholding the image is an act of worship, and through the eyes one gains the blessings of the divine" (Eck [1981] 1985:3). Seeing the divine is equally important at teyyam rituals, but in the process of beholding the visual form, teyyam devotees have the added opportunity to converse with the deities.

Following a teyyam's manifestation and dance in the form of a human medium, there is a period of consultation during which devotees are invited to approach and speak with the deity (fig. 5). Men and women approach the teyyam individually to ask for guidance, boons, blessings, divinations, or comfort; they present rupee coins and notes as an offering after which they receive a blessing in the form of flower petals or turmeric paste marked on their forehead by the teyyam. Most of the concerns brought before the deity are related to either the economic security or physical and psychological well-being of members of the devotee's family. Unemployment, school examinations, fertility problems, domestic conflict, substance abuse, illnesses, social pressures, bereavement—

these are some of the sources of anxiety that people cope with by turning to their faith in teyyams. For those who do not have grievances, questions, or favours to bring before the deity incarnate, the ritual offers a special occasion to witness embodied spiritual energy and power (*śakti*) in an intensely palpable, vivid form (*mūrtti*).

The synesthetic experience of being in the presence of a teyyam is further enhanced by the spiritual setting of the ritual in the vicinity of shrines or small temples located in sacred groves called *kāvŭs*. In earlier times, these places consisted of thick patches of indigenous tropical forest preserved as the domain of spirits and they were associated with the presence of snakes and stones representing the dwelling place of the main family deity and lineage ancestors. Today most kāvŭs contain small rectangular structures made of red brick (sometimes whitewashed) and wooden frames and roofs with carved gables colourfully depicting the deity residing in a non-anthropomorphic object (usually a weapon) kept inside. Increasingly, shrines are becoming more like temples by their size, opulence, and walled or physically demarcated compounds where a few indigenous trees are preserved in what is otherwise an open space. The small, raised, concrete platforms (taṟa) are arranged according to the cardinal area associated with each teyyam who inhabits the kāvŭ. The family taṟavāṭŭ who holds the hereditary authority over the kāvŭ usually lives a short distance away and it is their duty to maintain the integrity of the site, although since Indian Independence (1947) temple committees have largely taken over this responsibility.[16] Despite the clearing of indigenous vegetation and the construction that has resulted in kāvŭs resembling high-status temples, the atmosphere created through the association of divine (mostly feminine) presence and power with thicker undergrowth and the Dravidian serpent cult, heightens the sensuality of the ritual experience.

Every caste has a prescribed role regulating their participation in teyyam worship when they converge at the kāvŭ for annual festivals (*utsavam* or *kaliyāṭṭam*). If the ritual is sponsored by a former landowning taṟavāṭŭ (joint-family ancestral home), they pay the expenses with donations from the extended branches of the lineage and they must give official permission to open the event; otherwise, the larger community meets the cost of the festival through the administrative structure of a temple committee and there may or may not be a former landowning family to take permission from. In some places located near important Brahmin settlements, Nambūtiri priests are brought gifts (usually areca nut and betel leaf) as part of the reciprocal feudal relationship following which they provide the sacred flame from the temple to light the lamps at the shrines in the kāvū. Ritual attendants or low-caste priests (*kommaram*) from the highest of the ex-untouchable castes (usually Tiyya) act as the custodians of the kāvū, organizing regular worship (*pūja*) and offerings at the shrine throughout the year and taking on important ritual roles during the festival. Some castes gather and cut the firewood used in the ritual; others bring necessary materials and products, including coconut oil, coconut branches (fronds), flowers, copper, brass, precious metals, vegetables, fermented palm wine (toddy) and arrack (illicit spirits). As custodians of the deities, the Malayan are one of three main performing communities of ritual specialists called *kōlakkāran*, meaning personifier of the God from the word *kōlam* (divine form or appearance) and *kāran* (man). They have the avakāśam to perform local male and female versions of regional and pan-Hindu deities only, while the other two main castes, *Vaṇṇān* and *Munnutan* (also called *Velan*, also perform ancestral teyyams that became deified following legendary lives (Kurup [1973] 2000; Vishnu Namboodiri 1998).

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[16] In 1962 the Hindu Religious Endowments Commission led the way in transferring the custodianship of all Hindu temples from former private and caste-based ownership to the public domain, regulated by committees that included at least one representative of the central government (Hancock 2002).

When Malayan explain how they accomplish the goal of incarnating the deity they describe practices that fall under four processes, which structure the flow of action unfolding through teyyam spirit mediumship. These can be heuristically summarized as devotion, creativity, evocation, and embodiment. In chapter three, the crux of my argument, that hereditary musicality provides essential skills for accomplishing the goals of teyyam ritual events, rests on the premise that music is the most dynamic force in all four processes. This is largely due to its affective role in crafting a "community of sentiment" focussed around a local cult of Hindu worship (Appadurai 1990). Moving outward from the performer's core social and self-identity towards the complete embodiment of the spirit invited to inhabit a performer's body, each of these areas underlines skills and knowledge reflecting key dimensions of what it means to be a kōlakkāran. Addressing them sequentially according to four overlapping sets of actions that bring about the transmigration of the deity, I use these categories to focus on the practices and ideas the Malayan highlighted most in our conversations and through their actions.

Rigorous personal devotion is a critical practice teyyam performers cultivate to gain intimate awareness of and identification with deities they mediate in the ritual arena. Malayan devotional experience take many forms, beginning with daily pūjas, private worship through chanting prayers (*mantras*), lighting lamps, and burning incense before the image or object holding the presence of the particular divinity with whom the performer and his family have a special bond. Then, in the weeks before the first teyyam performance of the season (usually in the Malayalam month, *Tulām*, sometime in November), the performers who have been selected by the Janmari to serve as spirit mediums purify their bodies by fasting (taking *vratam*) and abstaining from illicit substances and sexual activity. A period of intense devotion follows, culminating in a fresh, focussed physical and mental state on the day the festival commences.

A temporary structure made of coconut fronds and bamboo poles called the *aṇiyaṟa* (green room) is set up for each performing caste in the compound of the kāvū to provide them with shelter and privacy while they prepare for the main stages of the ritual. During this period, the atmosphere inside these temporary rooms progresses from light-hearted banter and fun to deeply serious moments as the time for the appearance of the teyyam approaches. But prior to any activity, a small lamp is lit from a flame taken from the main shrine and the deity to be called is worshipped in the form of prayers (*mantra*) and offerings (*nivēdyam*). In this space, the emphasis on devotion shifts to creativity, as the performing communities concentrate on preparing all the material ornaments and dress that transform the medium's body.

In the aṇiyaṟa everyone works efficiently with careful attention to artistic detail in the process of preparing bodies to serve as vehicles of the divine: Tender coconut leaves are split for making billowy skirts; ornaments are attached to wooden headdresses; bracelets are meticulously threaded with flower petals to be given out as blessings; red and white cotton fabrics are sewn and wrapped around performers' waists; bodies, faces, and masks are scrupulously painted in detail to capture the face of the deity; and wooden torches are wrapped with white cloth soaked in coconut oil. Teyyam performers are gradually transformed into awesome forms as materials are imaginatively added according to protocol to achieve the characteristic persona of the deity they intend to call into their bodies. With this dramatic metamorphosis, performers experience a progressive psychological distancing of the self evidenced by their sombre shift in mood and expression in the moments before they call the divine into their being. The last adornments are attached while a praise hymn (*tōṯṯam*) is sung, thus marking the transitory moment when creative materially-engaged activities give way to emphatic efforts to elicit the appropriate mood, sentiment, and character that insiders refer to as *bhāva*.

Though kōlakkāranmar are trained to manipulate facial and body expressions in a similar fashion as high-caste theatrical art forms like katakaḷi and kuṭiyāṭṭam, the primary reason for mastering the art of bhāva (evoking moods) is different. Whereas performers in theatrical idioms focus on capturing the evocative essence of characters from dramatic scripts to please and move audiences (Zarrilli 1984; Richmond 1990), teyyam performers use hereditary training in dramatic arts to facilitate and enhance the presence of particular deities in their bodies. The extent to which a performer compellingly conveys the correct bhāva during the ceremony for the benefit of witnesses is secondary to the main goal of dissolving the self into the divine. Pleasing deities invited to take possession of bodies by evoking the bhāvas characteristic of their personality and moods is an important aspect of ritual performance. The focus on bhāva culminates in the moments prior to the full onset of a state of mediumship, melodically and rhythmically induced by singing the song of the deity known as the *tōṯṯam*, which translates as hymn of praise with wider semantic import as impulse, strength, and imagination. Sitting on a sacred wooden stool (*pīṭham*) with members of the insider group of specialists gathered around, the performer concentrates on identifying with the presence of the spirit. Typically an elaborately carved and adorned headdress is attached to his shoulders, back, and waist and shortly thereafter, he gazes into a small mirror handed to him by a ritual attendant at which time he sees the divine and his identity is submerged by the powerful presence of the deity.

Now the group's collective attention shifts to empowerment as the voices grow fuller and increase in tempo. The deity convulses violently while the body is still seated on the sacred stool. Charged with the dual task of invigorating and controlling the śakti (spiritual power) now incarnate in a human medium, some members of the group amplify and provoke the transition with powerful rolls on the *ceṇṭas* (cylindrical wooden drum) while others try to minimize the impact of the deity's arrival on the performer's body. Depending on the personality of the spirit, brilliant bhāvas, some ferocious and others jovial for example, further accentuate the power of the deity's presence. The teyyam then stands with the help of attendants and circumambulates the stool energetically, followed by the same clockwise rotation around the shrines in the compound (*pradakṣiṇam*). Next, he or she begins to dance with carefully executed steps called *kalāśam*, which are loosely organized to unfold in sequential patterns characteristic of the identity of the deity. Now that the dangerous unpredictability of śakti is contained within the structural moving frame of the dance[17], embodiment moves to the fore. The group actively accompanies the teyyam's movement, accentuating gestures through the skilful articulation of a soundscape punctuated with drums (ceṇṭas) and cymbals (*ilattāḷam*) while soaring melodic lines in the proper ragas (playing in melodic types) are played on the kurum kuḻal (oboe-like double-reed instrument). In some cases the dancing is interrupted by extraordinary displays of immortality that involve attaching flaming torches to the teyyam's attire, repetitive falling on burning embers, or walking on stilts while supporting a headdress several metres high. These dangerous, yet compelling moments of embodied śakti typically draw the largest audience of devotees, many of whom witness these sensational acts as living proof of divine habitation of the kāvŭ.

The kalāśam (dance) sequences continue until the teyyam is ready to be seated for the period in which blessings are given to devotees while listening to their concerns and accepting offerings. After several hours, the ritual of that particular teyyam comes to a close as the deity visits all parts of the compound, including each of the shrines housing separate teyyams. If they are carrying a weapon, they give it back to the kōmaram (low caste oracle and ritual specialist) at this time. Finally, the power is released back into the universe through the chanting of verses (*ślōkas*). This process is repeated for each teyyam residing in the kāvŭ until all have been mediated, worshipped, and released. At the end of the festival the teyyams are invoked one last time by playing all musical instruments in front of each of the raised platforms (taṟa). After the final purification rites no one is permitted to enter the kāvŭ for at least three days.

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[17] For an interpretation of how ritual provides a space for managing the ferocity of feminine power embodied by Goddesses perceived to be overheated with sexuality, see Caldwell's study of the dance-drama ritual, *muṭiyēṟṟŭ*, performed in central Kerala (1999:119-121).

With this, the basic cycle of teyyam mediumship is complete, bringing the discussion of Malayan ritual experience and status to a close. By approaching their collective identity through the prism of avakāśam, ceṛujanmam, and teyyam I establish a ground for understanding where hereditary musicality comes from and how it serves as a springboard for expanding Malayan social imaginaries in contemporary Kerala. Moreover, the decision to begin by foregrounding selected Malayan ways of being at the expense of other possibilities was calculated for another reason: to explain neo-feudal categories in the context of their modern relevance in people's lives. Therefore, despite the continuity of these practices with a pre-colonial past, they represent a foundational source of modern Malayan social identities and should not be viewed as pre-modern or pre-capitalist. Together, they provide a conceptual framework for exploring what it means to be Malayan and modern in both hereditary and non-hereditary contexts today.

B. Modern Ambitions: New Horizons for Malayan Musicality

> The alternatively modern thus harbors a dialectical notion of how becoming locally or nationally 'developed' occurs through selective appropriation, opposition, and redefinition of authenticity in relation to market forces and aspirations for economic and political improvement. (Knauft 2002:25)

Malayan are crafting identities that neither reject nor stigmatize hereditary musicality associated with their feudal occupational past. True, in line with the politics of dignity powering subaltern (especially Dalit) movement in contemporary India, many Malayan have stopped performing teyyam to escape positioning themselves as inferior through re-enactments of neo-feudal social relations; or they are simply trying to improve their economic situation. Nearly all members of the community I met favoured the idea that the community shares a collective status as skilled musicians who trace their assets through a hereditary past while using them in a modern present. Most Malayan who collaborated directly or peripherally in this project practised music with more zeal and discipline than the average Malabari, and moreover, many were playing professionally to supplement joint-family incomes. The question is this: If fewer Malayan are doing hereditary occupations and everyone is engaged in music, where and what are the non-hereditary venues? Identifying these venues is the first step towards asking what is it about music that makes it more convertible than other occupational assets in the process of entering other higher-status idioms and contexts?

To address the pervasive coexistence of modern and hereditary values in India, I wade into the debate over the concept of alternative modernities, a term that has gained much currency for its capacity to confront the Euro-centric weight of modernity. Although few would argue against the historical evidence tracing modern institutions and ideologies from the West to the rest of the world as a form of "discourse that interrogates the present" (Gaonkar 2001:14), there are differences of opinion on how these forces articulate with indigenous ways of being. Postcolonial studies has advocated a pluralization of Euro-centric master narratives to account for the myriad directions capitalism, and its cultural corollary of modern secularism and rationalism, has taken through interaction with non-Western forms of social, political, and economic organization (Chakrabarty 2000). Instead of treating modernity singularly as a teleological juggernaut of entangled economic and geo-political interests emanating from the West, it is now common to speak of alternative ways of being modern, to include all narratives formerly excluded from Western master narratives of history (Sahlins 1985; Wolf 1982).

One advantage of the idea of plural modernities— plural capitalisms in its strictly economic avatar, (Blim 2000)—is that it collapses binary oppositions pitting pre-modern, pre-capitalist colonized others against Western colonizing moderns. This creates the possibility of theorizing non-Western agencies as dynamic forces in their own right, forging modern experiences from distinctive global standpoints. What is less clear, though, is how such intellectual frameworks can be mapped onto the conditions of everyday life in the local present.

Much of the discourse confronting what it means to be alternatively modern stays curiously detached from the lived experiences of the people whose voices they implicitly claim to represent. Creating theoretical distance from social agents is falling into totalizing modes of thinking that limit confrontations with power inequities from the macro margins rather than at the micro-centres of the world. Cautioning against the tendency to slip away from confronting power struggles through sophisticated glossy assertions of cultural relativism, Lisa Rofel, takes issue with how modernity theorists "…traipse over the issue of translation as if it were merely a pragmatic dilemma, rather than, as many scholars have shown, a question of power." (2002:187). To return to Knauft's quote, above, it seems to me the only credible way to investigate the range of positionings people select in relation to larger economic conditions and political possibilities is to listen to their stories and bear witness to their praxis. Accordingly, the dialectic between positionings and material realities and their intrinsic friction is more meaningfully enriched through explanatory tools like alternative modernities if approached through a prism of perspectives from below where power struggles are unavoidable. Access to these perspectives is primarily through speech, hence the centrality of listening to what people say and how they say it in the process of recreating the world around them (Spitulnik 2002). Though admittedly imperfect in its tendency to slip away from what truly matters on the ground, alternative modernities offer non-totalizing pathways for understanding the articulation between local, national, and global forces. For example, the concept can provide a way of inquiring about the horizon of identity opportunities open to hereditary Malayan musicality without forcing a commitment to either side of the pre-modern/modern dichotomy. Without neglecting the macro historical and global conditions that limit the scope for constructing Indian subjectivities, for example regional South Asian post-colonial political and economic landscapes, the alternatively modern perspective critically orients the task of investigating how Malayan use their caste-based musical identity in different venues of performance. What forces have made Kerala notoriously alternatively modern? By tracing some of the regional dynamics that have shaped the state's institutions and social relations we can tease out some details of this dialectic of positionings and possibilities.

The stories that animate the textures of Kerala's alternative modernities stem from the state's unique positioning at the historical crucible of global capitalism and that other ideological carrier of modernity: communism. Not long after Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru swept Congress into power, Kerala came into being as the first democratically elected communist government in the world. The antecedents of this watershed event in Indian history can be traced to the colonial period when under British rule, northern Kerala was administered as part of the Madras Presidency, which included most of southern India, while south and central Kerala maintained the status of princely states. In the north the British encountered fierce resistance from local rajas as they imposed a land tenure and revenue system that undermined the reciprocal bonds between feudal non-producing families and their producing subjects. As a result, service providers and labourers became more vulnerable in the ebb and flow of a thoroughly capitalized plantation economy (Menon 1994).

At the time of Indian Independence, Kerala society was already ripe for Marxist-Leninist ideas of social equality, justice, and class struggle (Nossiter 1982; Balakrishnan 1998). Under the leadership of E.M.S. Namboodiripad, the Communist Party of India developed a grassroots stronghold in northern Malabar, also the centre of teyyam religious practice. Officially listed as a scheduled caste according to the segregated classification of disadvantaged Hindu communities by British census authorities, the Malayan identified with the Marxist concept of an oppressed proletariat. In a climate redefining Kerala society in terms of antagonizing classes, most Malayan joined the Party and some became important singers and orators in the fiery spirit of electioneering, rallying, and intimidation that has shaped the character of Kerala politics since Independence.

Since then, Malayan have approached politics in one of two ways: 1) with tactical ambiguity, hoping to gain jobs as performers in political and non-political spheres, or; 2) with unconditional dedication, becoming card-carrying instruments of one Party only, typically the Communist Party of India (Marxist). Nationalism in Kerala, then, was profoundly shaped by the regional dynamics of Malabar colonial history and the Marxist-Leninist ideologies that found fertile ground in the south. The socio-political climate encouraged Malayan to begin thinking about their hereditary occupation in terms of Marxist categories of labour. Influenced by the culture of trade unions and workers' movements (Heller 2001), teyyam performers began confronting high-caste temple and festival committees, demanding better remuneration and working conditions.

Meanwhile, in the spirit of decolonization following Independence, the Indian nation-state systematically appropriated regional cultural forms to serve in the public sphere. Elitist classical art music was resignified as the highest expression of national culture through the virtual and real spaces of public concerts, national radio, and music schools. For the first time Malayan musicians could access training in classical music idioms, usually from important centres of Karnatic music patronage in Madurai and Tanjavur. Already skilled in kurum kuṟal and ceṇṭa playing, they naturally took up the popular temple instruments, *nāgasvaram* (long double-reed instrument) and *tavil* (double-sided barrel drum), which qualified them to play at home for weddings and the high-caste temples of Malabar. Increasingly, Malayan could showcase their musicality in formerly exclusive high-caste spaces, including the domain of Karnatic classical music. Because of the paucity of Brahmin settlements in Malabar there were fewer centres where the emergent middle classes could turn for Karnatic music training. Supported by cultural nation-building and the bourgeoisification of the arts, a niche for classical music education developed and the Malayan began to fill it, positioning themselves as classical music teachers in the northern (remote) areas of the state.

In addition to these opportunities created through Kerala's political and nationalist entanglements, new venues have opened up in response to the economic liberalization policies initiated by India's Congress-led central government in the 90s. Since the New Economic policy was implemented in 1991 (Shurmer-Smith 2000), successive Kerala governments aimed to capitalize on the state's main asset, skilled labour. Among the areas identified as having the greatest growth potential were the software and tourism industries, which in both cases began with strong commitments to establish a base in the public sector before attracting private investment. As an important outgrowth of this focus, Kerala's tourism industry is now the fastest growing in the country and serves regularly as a model for developing the tourism potential of other states. The state's economy is increasingly dependent on the success of tourism and information technology sectors in attracting private investment as governments struggle to maintain expensive social welfare programs and create employment opportunities in a period of high unemployment, underemployment, and declining revenues from the centre.

In order to meet an expanding domestic and global market for Indian cultural tourism products, private and public stakeholders in Kerala's tourism industry have increasingly turned to showcasing performance idioms in product and marketing development strategies. They turned to private and state-sponsored associations and institutions that inherited the custodianship of artistic traditions from the previous landowning patrons of royal lineages (Zarrilli 1991). In collaboration with key cultural brokers in the West, many of Kerala's temple art forms were revived through institutional training as national culture and given new vitality as regional identity markers and ambassadors of Indian cultural excellence. Among the most internationally recognized was katakaḷi, the colourful, high-caste, sixteenth-century dance-drama based on stories from the pan-Indian epics formerly staged in temples for elite audiences. Visually stunning, aesthetically noble in its association with high-caste patronage, and richly sophisticated in its highly developed system of communication and performance practice—katakaḷi was the perfect choice to become the poster-icon for the promotion of tourism in the early 1980s.

By the late 1990s, the Kerala tourism industry was saturated with katakaḷi imagery, prompting marketing agencies to begin looking for untapped cultural tourism resources. The shift coincided with a decision to explore the potential for opening up the northern districts of Malabar, which were largely excluded from early promotional strategies that concentrated on the southern and central districts of the state. At the time, teyyam was undergoing a revival as a result of new modes of patronage supported by the influx of revenue from migrant labourers in the Gulf and an increasingly precarious socio-economic status in the newly-opened economy (Kurien 2002). The overwhelming visual appeal of the ritual was easily identified as a potentially lucrative icon for promoting Malabar as the state's new touristic frontier. Stakeholders in the industry, among them the public Ministry of Tourism and Kerala Tourism Development Corporation as well as the Leela group of five star hotels, have since fashioned an image of northern Malabar based on the primitive survival of "folk culture" nestled in thickly forested tropical rolling landscapes that cascade onto pristine beaches and the Arabian Sea (Nair 2002).

By the time tourism stakeholders moved to diversify the industry in Malabar, Teyyam performers were already established in India's national culture canon as ritual art specialists. The adaptive process of re-contextualizing the ritual on stage for urban domestic audiences with little appreciation of its religious purpose, was not unfamiliar.

Moreover, throughout the 1980s and early 90s, Indian and non-Indian folklorists, anthropologists, and performing arts scholars significantly raised the profile of the ritual through their research activities and subsequent involvement in organizing events and associations (Ashley 1993; Tarabout 2004:200-201).[18] When teyyam began to spark interest outside the positionings of neo-feudal ritual service, performers were well on their way towards a self-conscious awareness of the aesthetic, commercial, and discursive value of their hereditary knowledge. The global free market has opened yet another opportunity in the Malayan social imaginary. Since the late 90s, teyyam has been regularly staged for foreign and domestic audiences as spectacle, emphasizing virtuosic and sensational displays that appeal in particular to theatrical sensibilities (Gründ 2001).

It is the task of the remaining chapters in this dissertation to build an ethnographically-grounded interpretation of how these socio-economic and ideological entanglements—constituted by and constitutive of Kerala's alternative modernity—provide a horizon of mobile identity opportunities for Malayan to convert their hereditary toolkit of musical assets in the service of dignifying their families' lives.

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[18] See Kurup 2000 [1973], Gründ 1989, Ashley and Holloman 1990, Freeman 1991, Vishnu Namboodiri 1998; Payyanad 1998; Koga 2003, Tarabout 2004.

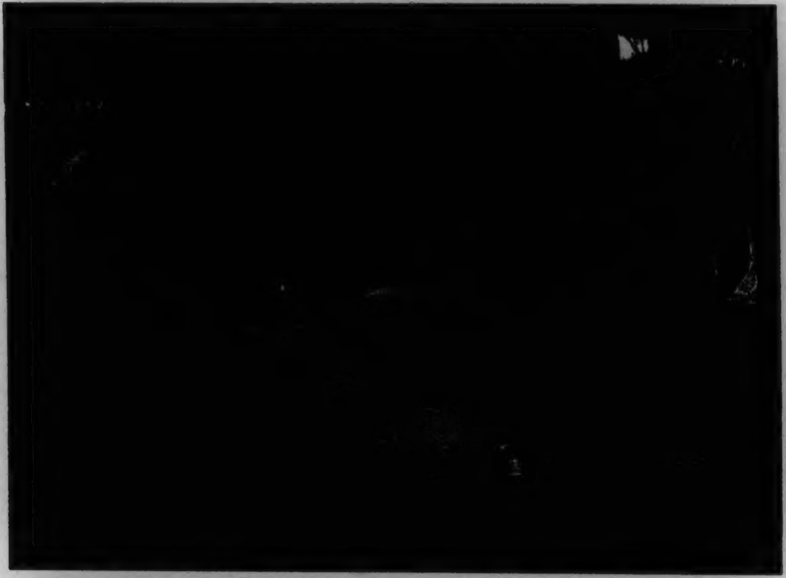

Figure 3. Malayan performers are served cooked rice, curry, and chilies on banana leaves by a senior member of a high-caste family during a teyyam festival.

Figure 4. Jitesh serves as acting *janmari* for his father, leading the *tōṯṯam* song that awakens the presence of the deity (*Kuṭṭiccāttan*) while securing the carved wooden framework attached to the medium's back

Figure 5. A young man makes an offering and talks with *Kuṭṭiccāttan* while receiving a blessing

CHAPTER 2

RELATIONAL CHALLENGES AND POSTFIELD TELLINGS

I invoke the heading "postfield tellings" following Bruner's concept of "posttour tellings" to confront anthropology's loss of the monopoly over cultural representation to other disciplines, and increasingly to the masses as well (2005:24). Considering the methodological and representational challenges facing ethnographic disciplines in the aftermath of postmodern critiques (Marcus and Fischer 1986; Clifford 1988), it is worth asking: Are ethnomusicologists ennobling the practice of musical tourism? The similarities between what ethnographers do under the banner of scholarship and what contemporary travellers do under the banner of cultural tourism can no longer be brushed aside (Errington and Gewertz 2004). To be sure, ethnographers spend long periods of time in rural localities off the beaten track, learning the language and lifeways of the people; yet some modes of tourism package long periods of stay that promote opportunities to engage in unprecedented levels of participation in local daily life. Language, cooking, working, and playing are activities frequently included in the itineraries of experiential and existential tourists (Cohen 1979). While ethnographers use sophisticated equipment to meticulously record their experience as accurately as possible, cameras, audio and video recorders, notebooks, and diaries have also become essential tools for leisure travellers. If nothing else, one could counter that ethnographers write critically about what they learn; however, tourists are increasingly communicating their "self-interested fictions" (Errington and Gewertz 2004:197) through a variety of sophisticated textual and media formats, ranging from blogs and websites, to magazines, travel literature, and digital videos.

What then distinguishes tourists from ethnographers? Besides developing sophisticated theoretical apparatuses for describing meaning and action in social life, ethnographers have a responsibility to be more politically motivated in their attempts to draw broader connections that matter in the micro textures of the lives they collaborate with in the course of travels and stays abroad (Asch 2003; Errington and Gewertz 2004:207). A concern with navigating the collaborative relational terrain that facilitates making these connections compassionately and compellingly is a positioning that distinguishes ethnographic orientations.

Following this premise, chapter two confronts issues of representation and the unsettling realities of doing fieldwork: finding a focus, probing the limits of Euro-centric epistemologies and methodologies, and coming to terms with where I stand. First, I trace some of the representational projects that have presented versions of Malayan subjectivity to the world, from Thurston's colonial ethnography to Kerala's aggressive tourism marketing machine. Hence the organization of the discussion begins with issues of textual representation, followed by a shift towards narrating the evolution of my practice and thinking in the field between relational positionings. Highlighting "the creating of equivalence between the protagonists in the process—the researcher and the music makers" (Qureshi 1994:347), I underline the specific sites, settings, and relationships that have shaped the ideas distilled from the ethnography. Then, after engaging critically with three methodological and ethical challenges concerning oral histories, video recording and the role of interpreters and translators, I close by situating myself.

A. Unlearning Subaltern Lives: From Colonial Ethnography to Tourism Brochures

> The narrow epistemic violence of imperialism gives us an imperfect allegory of the general violence that is the possibility of an episteme.
> — Gayatri Spivak, *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*

In her penetrating article "Can the Subaltern Speak?" (1988), Spivak forcefully questions whether subjugated voices are even accessible from privileged standpoints, challenging ethnographers to confront the representational limits to voicing subalternity in their work. Following Derrida, Spivak argues that instead of pretending to let the oppressed speak, a better option is to listen to the voice of the other in us, to learn to represent us rather than claim to non-represent the Other (ibid.:298). But the search for the ethnographic "we" or "I" in Derrida's conceptual trace of absent difference in claims of truth (1967:101-102) paralysed scholarship to the extent that the only possible answer to Spivak's question was no, the subaltern cannot speak. Even when subaltern individuals reach the privileged field of academic positionings, they are compelled to adopt the epistemologies, languages, desires, and interests of the dominant group reproducing the system; they become that third level of subjectivity identified by Guha in his mission statement for the India-centred subaltern studies group (1982), namely regional and local elites, or as Spivak says "the naturally articulate subject of oppression" (ibid.:298).

Without accepting the foreclosure of Spivak's line of thinking, I recognize the relational implications for academic authority—the risk of complicity in the constitution of subaltern subjectivity while unlearning the epistemic violence that colonialism and neo-colonialism inflicts on marginalized peoples like the Malayan. More importantly, though, I take seriously her imperative to uncover all representational interests that shape the construction of subaltern subjectivities in Western discourse. The task is important for two reasons: first, to reflexively situate myself in the representational process, and second, to uncover the influence of representational discourses—Western and Indian—in the scope of subaltern identity opportunities and margins in the regional dynamics of India's public sphere.

Later in this chapter I respond to the first aspect of Spivak's challenge to situate myself relationally, to make it clear where I stand. The second aspect concerning the range of representational discrepancies informing Malayan positionings is the focus of this section. Here I move away from perspectives on what it means to be Malayan and how they see themselves in relation to others to consider what others have said about them. This exercise is premised on my understanding that the horizon of possibilities outlined in chapter one is contingent on a wide range of representational practices that gain or lose currency in specific Indian social imaginaries. In short, representation matters dearly, and with that I turn to early attempts at constructing a picture of the Malayan in colonialist ethnography from the turn of the century.

The British colonial ethnographer Edgar Thurston conducted his first ethnographic survey in 1894 in the Nilgiri Hills of the Western Ghats bordering the intersection of the southern states of Kerala (Malabar), Tamil Nadu, and Karnataka. In 1901, British colonial authorities appointed him to the post of Superintendent of

Ethnography for the Madras Presidency, a large territory under direct British rule that encompassed most of southern India, including the region of Malabar. His job was to gather information about the populations living in South India at the time, the findings of which he reported through bulletins, lectures, photographs, phonograph records, and museum displays at the capital Madras. Published in seven volumes, his *Castes and Tribes of Southern India* contains a veritable treasure trove of ethnographic detail about colonial encounters with India's southern peoples, being the only extensive survey of Indian castes of Southern India in the early twentieth century ([1909] 1975). Description of physical appearances, religious practices, economic activities, social relations, and other historical and anecdotal detail form the substance—with varying degrees of depth—for each alphabetized entry of a caste or community. Included in this body of ethnographic sketches is one of the first attempts to represent the Malayan as a distinct group in Malabar society in contrast with earlier observations and accounts that only mention Malayan in passing contrast with high castes, whom ethnographers, colonial administrative officials, and missionaries were primarily interacting with (see Fawcett 1901:261; Ṭarabout 2005:188-190).

Interestingly, Thurston's account of the Malayan provides almost equal space for photos and text, featuring three full-page black and white photos of teyyam performers. Whereas other entries with photos are typically longer with several pages of ethnographic description, the Malayan text amounts to only three and a half pages, resulting in one of the plates being included in another caste section after the entry on the Malayan. Evidently, Thurston felt the images were remarkable, though he was short of information to balance the text. All three photos depict direct, frontal shots of male teyyam performers appearing to momentarily interrupt a ritual action in order to gaze into the camera lens.

This contrasts with other entries in the survey that vary the composition of photographs in their portrayal of communities, interspersing portraiture with village scenes and shots of sacred sites and dwelling structures. Unlike the composed action of the Malayan performers, in other photos where ritual action is the focus, the scene usually appears more candid with the actors engaged in the acts of the ritual. Socially too, most entries containing several photos in the volumes are more diverse, featuring men, women, and children separately, as well as in family settings. Moreover, the Malayan photos are conspicuous by their unique framing, the direct frontal positioning giving the impression that there is communication between the photographer's gaze (also the reader's) and the gaze of the elaborately adorned performers engaged in a ritual. Unlike the carefully composed ethnographic portraits in which people appear submissive and passive against a blank background, the images of the Malayan are more actively contextualized at sites that situate the performers in a ritual occasion. Recognizing that photos tell more about the photographer and the readers than the actual people photographed, what do these shots say about Thurston and the colonial context in which he worked?

In the first shot, a Malayan wearing a crown-like headdress and a large hoop-skirt with dangling coconut fronds is pictured posing with a dead fowl dangling from his mouth against the backdrop of a wall that appears to be the entrance to the *kāvŭ* compound (fig. 6). The sacrifice that has presumably taken place marks the climactic moment for many teyyam ceremonies at which time the God or Goddess is presented with fresh blood as an offering intended to both please and appease them. The second photo features a performer with a similar type of skirt, this time with legs wide a part, one hand grasping a *kurum kuḻal* (oboe-like double-reed instrument) against his hip and the other arm raised in the air at eye-level, in a position that suggests he is holding a dance posture (fig. 7). Dark patterns of shadow textured by dense vegetation flood the space behind him. Finally, the third photo is more sublimely passive in its effect, with two decorated Malayan performers, one with a tall, conical, shapely headdress and billowy fabric around a frame encircling the waist, holding a spear, and the other with a slighter frame displaying a bare chest, a round headdress and armed with shield and sword (fig. 8). Reflecting the Euro-centric colonial Christian bias of the times, all three captions at the bottom of the photos identify the Malayan caste as "devil-dancers."

The colonial practice of labelling Indian Others in the production of ahistorical subjectivities for academic and administrative discourses has been thoroughly confronted in recent decades, beginning with Said's watershed critique of orientalism (1979). So when Thurston mistakenly labels spirit-medium specialists devil dancers—and unintentionally misrepresents powerful deities with benevolent and malevolent tendencies as manifestations of evil similar to a Christian concept of the devil—it is conventional to historicize his discursive act. This involves locating the origins of the text at the crossroads of disapproving Christian missionary views of polytheistic religions, white supremacist theories of social Darwinism nourished by Orientalist scholarship, Western colonial geo-political and economic interests, and derogatory high-caste Brahmin views of non-Brahminical Hindu religious practices.[19] Concerning the latter hegemonic discourse, Inglis describes how "rituals involving possession, often accompanied by blood sacrifice and spectacular forms of asceticism, became a trump card in efforts to distinguish so-called Dravidian from Aryan cultural characteristics as well as 'devil worship' or 'demonolatry' from Brahmanical Hinduism and its philosophical traditions" (1985:89). Driven by a dialectical tension between ideas in secular rationalism, proselytizing monotheism, as well as Vedic Hinduism, and material forces in capitalist expansion and indigenous consolidation of wealth in a high-caste Indian elite, the constellation of historical dominant interests facilitates a double denial of agency in Thurston's construction of non-Western subjectivity.

Apparent in the use of "devil dancer" to describe who the Malayan are, is the simultaneous disempowering of the supernatural agency attributed to the deities mediated by the Malayan on one hand, and the agency of the Malayan on the other. As inheritors of ritual knowledge and skills that make them actively capable of influencing the well being of everyone in the community through healing, spirit-mediumship, and midwifery, the Malayan exercised a powerful form of agency that did not have an equivalent in castes of a similar rank in Malabar society. Accordingly, whereas Thurston's textualized representation is entirely shaped by the Western colonialist imaginary and agenda, the photos he includes open up other possibilities of reading the relationship between colonial authorities and the Malayan performer, the image of the latter constituting "... not simply a captured view of the other, but rather a dynamic site at which many gazes or viewpoints intersect" (Lutz and Collins 1993:187). The agency of Malayan positioning, though frozen in a context of ritual action, therefore cannot be entirely dispossessed by virtue of the inclusion of the Malayan gaze in the representation. The intensity of the confrontational expression of their gaze, particularly that of the Malayan depicted in the first photo, tells a counter-story that I contend captures some of the agency lost in Thurston's descriptors.

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[19] The interpreters and consultants with whom Thurston worked would have all been high-caste, particularly from Brahmin communities.

Notwithstanding the challenge of the Malayan performer in Thurston's photograph, the agency effaced through words and partially restored in the ethnographic image cannot be credibly celebrated in the manner of poststructural romancing of resistance. At the time of Thurston's encounter, Malayan were and to a certain extent remain economically and socially marginalized due to their low status as a polluting caste, albeit one with more leverage than other communities because of the ritual knowledge they possess and the positioning within Malabar society it has enabled. The epistemic violence of colonialism by way of reification of Brahminical ideologies of hierarchy in static interpretations of caste made identity opportunities more restricted than ever before across India's canvas of the past (Dirks 2001; Thapar 2002). Yet, as narrated in the previous section, the institutions and ideologies that emerged from the aftermath of Malabar modernity facilitated new possibilities of self and group consciousness based on skills associated with hereditary contexts. For this to have happened, there must have been an element of resiliency in the agency associated with Malayan occupational praxis. Versatility must have also been a contributing factor in the use of skills to develop new ways of improving status at the same time as formerly fluid possibilities for affirming identity were foreclosed by colonial legal systems informed by census authorities.

In my view, the nexus of skills derived from ritual, creative, and performance practices constitutes the main source of resiliency, versatility, and strategic ambiguity that characterizes Malayan positionings in the postcolonial Indian public sphere. I add ambiguity because of the irony that resonates from their tactical use of a reputation engendered by externally-imposed colonial categories to their advantage; they accomplish this even as the same categories (for example devil dancer) that are recycled in Indian postcolonial discourse present formidable obstacles to socio-economic advancement. The musical basis of this hereditary ambivalence is hinted at by Thurston when he states: "As the profession of exorcists does not keep the Malayans fully occupied, they go about begging during the harvest season ... They further add to their income by singing songs, at which they are very expert" (Thurston [1909] 1975:438).

Significantly, the positive evaluative adjective "expert" is not applied to the practice of exorcising the devil, but rather to the musicality they use to supplement their means of subsistence in between harvests.

Music, according to Thurston, is not just a tool the Malayan use to worship the devil through black magic and sorcery, it is an expert skill they possess. Accordingly, even though his portrayal of the Malayan misconstrues their lived realities, his account is important here for two reasons: first, it confirms that the Malayan clearly possessed undeniable acumen in their knowledge of occult and musical practices more than a century ago; and second, it demonstrates how early colonial knowledge froze caste distinctions in ethnographies and in the process turned fictional categories based on occupational services embedded in reciprocal social arrangements into performance genres like devil dancing. Later this mode of thinking and ordering India formed the basis for a Sanskrit (Aryan northern) civilized versus Dravidian (southern) uncivilized dichotomy, which became euphemistically couched in terms of "great" and "little" traditions in the neo-colonial discourse of Marriott (1955), Redfield ([1956]1960), and later Singer (1972). Freeman summarizes the process well:

> The authors and expositors of the Sanskrit traditions established the Sanskrit language, literature, and the institutions informed by them as the acme of human achievement, against which all other cultural forms were graded. The pan-Indian typology in which this was done was explicitly hierarchical, whereby local traditions and cultures were consigned to a residual category. (1991:13-14)

Thurston established an orientalist textual framework replete with essentializing categories for understanding the Malayan, which influenced subsequent representations by academic and bureaucratic authorities. For the inheritors of the colonialist anthropological project at the Anthropological Survey of India, the orientalist discourse was simply translated into a nationalist discourse with only cosmetic changes to the practice and purpose of ethnography. The vocabulary and colonialist ideology reflected in Thurston's work continues to inform not only non-Malayan interpretations of the Malayan community, but also written descriptions authored by Malayans themselves.

For example, when I was asked to proofread an MA paper by a Malayan colleague studying applied economics at Kannur University I was surprised to come across the uncritical use of Thurston's categories, including "devil dancer," to describe the hereditary occupation of his caste. At first I simply interpreted this situation as evidence that European colonial categories continue to have wide currency in India and that there are difficult linguistic challenges facing disadvantaged students who do not attend private English-medium schools. I now realize that it is simplistic, and even patronizing, to explain the complexity of postcolonial identity formation by way of the impact of orientalism on nation building alone. This would perpetuate the same denial of subaltern agency confronted in Thurston's ethnography written a century earlier. Quite apart from the challenge of writing and reading the English language, my colleague was consciously using Thurston's category as a way of legitimizing the ritual and creative status of his Malayan pedigree. To fully accomplish this in the postcolonial space of nationalism, however, respectable genres are needed to situate these hereditary abilities. This brings the discussion to the appropriation of the nineteenth-century genre category of "folk" by Indian cultural discourses in the construction of a modern nation-state (Chatterji 2003).

Folk music genres provided an aesthetic frame of reference for bringing performing traditions into the arena of cultural nationalism. Despite being implicitly and explicitly contrasted with the "greatness" of classical idioms (Babiracki 1991), the status of folk genres has risen due to their role in the construction of national Indian and regional social imaginaries (ibid. 2000). The use of new media was instrumental in forming the contours of a national identity, with the All India Radio in particular playing a prominent role in the classification and dissemination of folk music genres. Meanwhile new venues for live performance in the form of public concerts and cultural festivals provided the urban space for presenting these traditions in the public sphere. Finally, folk music also entered into the Indian imaginary through the immense popularity and integrative reach of the songs featured in Bollywood and regional film industries (Arnold 1988; Viswanathan and Allen 2005:114-115). Further, as Breckenridge and van der Veer note, "there is an interesting interface between nationalism and transnational processes... The flow of cultural goods, persons, and information in the world system creates cultural arenas that go beyond those defined by the nation-state while undoubtedly related to them" (1994:13). While the social standing associated with the category of folk may be limited within the horizon of possibilities defined in relation to the territorial boundaries of the Indian nation-state, in transnational global frames of reference the category acquires new signifying potential, which brings us to Malayan musical and ritual identities as part of the promotion of Kannur district in tourism brochures.

Painting Malabar as an irresistible cultural garden, the District Tourism Promotional Council (DTPC) and its private partners resignify Malayan "devil-dancers" as timeless repositories of visual and sonic folklore:

> Kannur district is bounded by a wealth of natural beauty. The district itself which shares much of this natural splendour has been a key contributor to the cultural, religious, political and industrial heritage of the State. In addition, Kannur enjoys the credit of having been the cradle of many a colourful folk art and folk music of Kerala. (DTPC 2001)
>
> The folk singer, while he sings out in a loud voice, accompanying Theyyam or along with his own dancing steps, uses simple, but effective language and straight, but thought-provoking, images. (Government of Kerala 2003:44)

In these descriptions from Kerala government promotional materials conceived for the domestic and non-Indian English-speaking tourist markets, Thurston's category of "devil dancing" is replaced by the nationalist construction of folk dancing. The first passage was taken from a colourful pamphlet with a cartoon-like teyyam image featured prominently on the cover against a tropical background of beaches and coconut palms (fig. 9). On the inside, a map showing key tourist sites is adjacent to a photo of a Malayan teyyam ritual scene. To the left of Vishnu's half-human and half-lion avatar (Narasimham) known locally as *Viṣṇumūrtti* teyyam, *ceṇṭa* players play the correct rhythms corresponding to the dance steps of the Malayan *kōlakkāran* embodying the deity. In the foreground also to the left, a white hand arches over a camera lens and pierces the photo's frame to get a picture of the ritual unfolding, thus modelling the kind of exotic experience and souvenirs that are waiting for prospective tourists, the viewers of the pamphlet.

The second excerpt is from a colourful handbook featuring the Malayan community in a photo on the front cover and mentioned in text under two separate headings. In the foreground of the picture on the front, a Vaṇṇān performer mediates the goddess Panayakattu Bhagavathy, his body painted bright red and adorned by a large circular headdress and skirt made of coconut fronds with protruding burning torches. In the background, two Malayan *ceṇṭa* players are accompanying the ritual from a distance, watching the steps of the performer intently. Later in the body of the text, the first entry mentioning the Malayan occurs in a list under the subheading "Scheduled Castes and Tribes" (SCs and STs) as part of a larger section on religion. Significantly, the SCs and STs are isolated textually from the description of other higher castes, Muslim, and Christian communities, yet there is no discussion of distinctive features related to their religious practices that might justify their separate treatment from the other communities. The approach adopted by the tourism marketing strategists in which the Malayan and other marginalized groups are bracketed-off from the more general discussion of communities under religion has important implications.

First, this is an attempt to portray the religion of SCs and STs as distinct from the worship associated with upper castes, and second, by singling these groups out, they are constituted as attractions on their own and therefore they are given special visibility in the text, hence the stunning photo of the Vaṇṇān spirit medium and Malayan musicians on the cover. Later towards the centre of the booklet the Malayan are mentioned under the heading Arts and Culture in connection with folk dances and three rituals associated with the community, including the section on teyyam. In all entries, which include the genre terms "folk-song," "folk-play," and "folk-life," the adjective "folk" is used to locate the community within the larger national cultural frame of reference as distinct from the elite arts associated with Sanskrit traditions of painting, literature, music, and theatre that appear in a section at the end of the booklet.

There is a clear break between the "folk" embodied by particular communities, especially the Malayan, and the individual artists and patrons whose contributions are mentioned in connection with those genres associated with classical and modern popular arts. A dichotomy polarizing the categories of folk/community and art/individuals surfaces in this text as a reminder of the extent to which Indian cultural nationalism reproduces the orientalizing practice of ahistoricizing traditionally marginal collectivities in contrast with Western-derived notions of individuality and artistry. Despite a half-century of grassroots political participation, education, health, and the spread of media technologies, characterizations of the Malayan still echo Thurston's focus on the esoteric and musical expertise associated with teyyam. Few sources acknowledge the range of contrasting modalities of religious and musical practice that have been embraced and nourished in the community since Independence.

Tourism brochures provide an important resource for creating stories that advertise experiences tourists might be interested in buying. As Bruner insightfully points out, "experience may be the ultimate tourist commodity, but in itself experience is inchoate without an ordering narrative, for it is the story, the telling, that makes sense of it all, and the story is how people interpret their journey and their lives." (2005:20) Promoting a tourism destination, then, involves drawing on cultural and natural resources to weave together stories that employ tropes that fit comfortably in the metanarratives of potential domestic and foreign markets. Folk performers have a role to play in these stories. They are the timeless un-self-conscious collective Other that can interchangeably appear in colonialist and nationalist social imaginaries to reconfirm the superiority of the imaginers, in this case domestic and foreign affluent tourists. The Malayan are playing the role of the toured as folk ritual performers in Kerala tourism promotional campaigns. The positionings they take up as a result of the representational practices in this enterprise both enables and limits their scope for agency, providing a source of revenue and status on one hand and reaffirming untouchable stigmas on the other.

What emerges out of this discussion is a paradoxical friction and complementarity between the way Malayan actually live and envision their ambitions and the stereotypical modes of representation that reaffirm both negative and positive aspects of their hereditary status. While Thurston's colonialist sketch of a community of devil dancers masked the agency Malayan have always exercised through their creativity and ritual expertise in sacred arenas, the tourism brochure also occludes the individual and collective agency that Malayan mobilize to gain access to transnational venues as folk performers. Yet despite a static and subjugated representation in the text of tourism brochures, I intend to make the case in subsequent chapters that Malayan do have options for contesting the epistemic violence of colonialism and nationalism in the embodied arena of performance. The positions they adopt through performance at transnational intersections of people in tourism venues demonstrate the resiliency and creativity of their hereditary identity while also staying within the scripted boundaries of nationalist and tourist imaginaries.

B. Finding a Focus Under the Weight of Disciplinary Expectations

This study is based on research conducted in Kerala over sixteen months during two separate trips, the first beginning in November 2002, to September 2003, followed by a second period from January—June, 2004. A third brief period of participant observation work was completed over two weeks at a Kerala cultural festival in Geneva, Switzerland, and at travel agencies and cultural institutions in Paris in early October 2004.

During our first five months in India, my partner Laure and I lived in the state capital, Thiruvananthapuram, near the southern tip of Kerala. At first, I concentrated on getting culturally and linguistically oriented and making contacts through my affiliation as a research scholar with the University of Kerala in the departments of music and sociology, while Laure taught French at the local branch of the French language-teaching institute, Alliance française. A prestigious urban centre for cultural elites, the French institute offered a web of contacts that would later prove timely for my research interests when the agency staged a teyyam ritual on location prior to a performing troupe's festival tour in France. Although prior to arriving in Kerala I completed a preliminary course in the state's official language, Malayalam, I also used this time in the capital to work on speaking the language with the help of a tutor. At the same time I took advantage of the library resources in the city, studied South Indian Karnatic music (classical voice) and engaged in participant-observation work at cultural and religious events, including temple festivals, art performances, and tourism festivals.

As I narrowed the focus for my dissertation on Malayan musicality, I began taking short trips to the northern region of Malabar to attend teyyam rituals, meet contacts, and in the process consider possible locales for conducting fieldwork that would serve both our career interests. In May, 2003, we moved to the village panchayat of Dharmadam and rented a house a few kilometres north of the main coastal town of Thalassery in Kannur district. The location was central for my fieldwork—by then centred on the musical life and economy of the Malayan community—and it was also near one of the newly-established Kannur University campuses, which was convenient for Laure to continue teaching French. We stayed until September, followed by a break for three months in Edmonton, and then returned for a second period between January-June, 2004, during which time we lived in the same village. In October 2004, I completed the fieldwork by covering a consultant/friend's participation in a Kerala cultural festival organized by "Les ateliers d'ethnomusicologie" in Geneva and by visiting travel agencies and "La maison des cultures du monde" in Paris, a state-funded organisation that had previously organised teyyam performances in France.

When we first arrived in Thiruvananthapuram in Southern Kerala, my intention was to study the links between globalization and Adivasi (their preferred self-designation in place of the pejorative "tribal" or bureaucratic "scheduled tribe") oral traditions. These groups maintain distinctive linguistic, religious and cultural identities based on their indigenous status, as well as shared experiences and memories of marginalization, exploitation, land alienation and socio-economic exclusion in relations with dominant groups in Indian society. I planned to investigate how indigenous peoples on the Kerala side of the Western Ghats use music and orality differently as a result of their experiences living in a state that is distinct from other regions in the Indian Republic for its grassroots political participation, remarkable development achievements, and burgeoning tourism industry. Anticipating a study of Adivasi musical responses to regional socio-economic and political dynamics, including cultural tourism projects, I began looking for what I believed was essential for any ethnomusicological project—a suitable music genre that would allow me to explore these social themes in my work.

Unlike most ethnomusicologists, I was not drawn to study a particular musical idiom, a departure that presented a significant challenge from the outset. My reasons for choosing Kerala to do fieldwork were completely unrelated to the region's musical genres (Groesbeck and Palackal 2000), which I knew very little about prior to my first trip. Rather the people, histories, and ideologies of the southwestern tip of the Indian Peninsula influenced my decision to do fieldwork in Kerala. But the weight of ethnomusicological tradition prevailed and finding a genre became an important priority during our stay in the capital; it seemed unthinkable to even consider doing research without a recognizable musical object of study.

After a month of reviewing literature on the performing idioms associated with marginalized groups and meeting contacts through the city's cultural networks, I gradually became interested in the people who perform the spirit-medium ceremony teyyam. Recognizing that the ritual's musical practices were relatively unexplored in the literature, this direction appeared more promising compared to the Adivasi focus for several reasons. First, the stunning visual imagery of teyyam was increasingly co-opted by public and private agencies to serve as a ubiquitous promotional icon for the tourism industry; it was viewed as a symbol of potential wealth (profits) for attracting investment in the lesser-developed northern region of Malabar. Second, whereas Adivasi interaction with tourists was primarily through eco-tourism projects, the communities who perform teyyam were participating musically in the new relations of production at touristic borderzones. When several knowledgeable consultants I met singled out the Malayan for their outstanding musical contributions to the ritual form, I became intrigued with the possibility of learning about their lives in this newly-opened economic sphere.

Unlike other spirit-medium rituals in Kerala which have declined in practice, teyyam was experiencing a resurgence in popularity and was thus firmly anchored in the belief system and social life of Hindu communities in northern Kerala. Moreover, according to the census, the Malayan were listed as a scheduled caste and scheduled tribe depending on the region, which suggested an opportunity to do collaborative work with a subaltern community belonging to a population whose musical lives have been underrepresented in the Indian ethnomusicological literature dominated by classical idioms. Moreover, the prospect of learning about music and teyyam also offered the possibility to explore questions related to music and politics, as the ritual was practised in an area popularly described as the hotbed of the Communist Party of India (Marxist).

Lastly, a series of serendipitous encounters with individuals who represented a diverse range of perspectives on teyyam had a substantial influence on my decision to continue exploring the topic's potential. In particular, a Malayan graduate student who was studying in the capital facilitated my entry into the community by arranging a meeting with a family living near his village in Northern Malabar. He understood that I wanted to learn about the music of teyyam through the prism of Malayan hereditary musical assets and agreed with my idea that I should begin by taking music lessons from a respected member of the community. By choosing this route I followed a classic method preferred in ethnomusicology since early emphasis in the field on bi-musicality (Hood 1960).

The social institution of discipleship in which students undergo musical training under the spiritual, philosophical and artistic guidance of a *guru* (teacher) has been a primary mode and source of learning in Indic music scholarship (Neuman [1980] 1990; Kippen 1988; Qureshi in print). In addition to offering a recognizable (at least for Western students accustomed to the apprenticeship common in classical music pedagogical situations) structural setting for building relationships within the framework of culturally defined roles between teachers and students, the occasion provides a regular interactive setting for accessing familial and communal ties as well as the more general imponderabilia of daily life, to borrow Malinowksi's classic, yet no less relevant, descriptor (1922). The point worth underscoring here is that I felt compelled to go through a disciplinary rite of passage by using the music lesson to position myself between a caste/community and a music genre: the music of the Other, their music, Malayan music, the music of teyyaṃ.

When members of the family began displaying abilities in other musical genres, namely classical idioms, my initial reaction was to edit these practices out of the project since they were inconsistent with my caste-genre focus on teyyam. Under the tutelage of father and son I began training on the principal instrument used in teyyam rituals, the *ceṇṭa*—a tall, double-headed, cylindrical wooden drum held with a strap around the shoulder and neck and played while standing with thin wooden sticks slightly curved upward at the ends. Early on in our sessions, the son, Jitesh, was keen to display his family's versatility by demonstrating North Indian Hindustani classical techniques on his tabla.[20] He told me he had studied under a Muslim guru in the region and it was through these training sessions that he met a young French man, thereby highlighting his classical musical capital and Western contacts.

After a few weeks of lessons I noticed that the daughter, Rija, was giving weekly Karnatic music lessons to children out of the family home in the same room where I was being trained. As I met more people in the region, I learned that Rija was a renowned singer in the district, known for her impressive classical, devotional, light and cinema music performances and recordings. Furthermore, even the eldest son who was comparatively less involved in music, sang and learned how to read Western notation to play the keyboard and guitar in addition to instruments connected with teyyam.

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[20] The tabla, a northern two-piece drum used in classical and popular music idioms, has been diffused widely in South India as a result of pervasive North Indian cultural influences via radio, television, and film media.

I became increasingly fascinated by the family's musical history outside the stylistic, formal, and functional boundaries of the teyyam arena (fig. 10). After meeting more Malayan families in the area I realized that they were not exceptional. There appeared to be a larger historical and contemporary pattern of conversion of the community's hereditary musical assets. Conversations with members of other castes—usually higher in ritual status—confirmed my impression that the Malayan were indeed widely recognized as musical specialists and that these assets were being used in performance arenas that were formerly only accessible to high castes.

Following a period of reflection on these experiences during a brief return to Canada for three months, I refocused my research project on how hereditary musicality serves as a tool for pursuing social mobility in the Malayan community. My goal was to use interviews and participant observation to understand how Malayan agencies are accessing new performing spaces created in the landscape of Malabar's alternative modernity.

C. Three Challenges: Methodological Hurdles from a South Indian Field

Listening for the Non-Western "I" in Life Stories

Listening to life stories was a key method I employed while learning about Malayan formulations of self-in-society (Blackburn and Arnold 2004:19). In her influential *Oral Histories: The Creation of Coherence*, Linde identifies two ways of going about this: The first she describes metaphorically as a portal approach, or an "attempt to use life histories to learn about some reality external to the story, which the life history is presumed to mirror" (1993:48). The second focuses more on the process and use of narrative and discursive forms. Because my thematic priorities were centred around individual musical praxis, I concentrated less on textual analysis and more on learning about Malayan personhood through the content, the events, the relationships, and the sentiments that provided the fabric for the stories consultants wove dialogically with the past.

This is not to say I engaged stories merely as a means to an end; indeed I noted expressive features of oral accounts as key signs of the dynamics involved in negotiating selves in the process of making sense between individuals, or what Linde calls the creation of coherence. But my priorities did not include identifying and classifying formal and textual qualities of narrative genres, conversations with consultants being more pragmatically focussed on the portal approach to determine what people felt was important to say by paying attention to how they said it against relevant historical and social backgrounds. Moreover, engaging in rigorous textual analysis required a much more thorough understanding and command of the language and its application in various speech communities than my level of competency permitted at the time. The linguistic challenge, however, was only one of several to surface in the process of eliciting oral histories in socio-cultural settings outside the familiar frames of reference in Western industrialized societies.

The emergence of the concept of biography in Western societies was a symptom of the general shift in early modernity towards reflexively-constituted, linearly-conceived subjectivities and the notion of the authentic self, which can be self-evaluated or evaluated by others (Giddens 1991). The idea of the life history as a genre carries the same underlying Euro-centric presuppositions about selfhood that inform written biographies, namely that a person's life can be understood by tracing the lifestyle choices and identity crises of a lifespan through narrative form. In contrast with pre-modern emphasis on locales wherein tightly-knit kinship relations and traditional religious authority provide the primary sources for constructing self-identities, under modernity a plurality of interactive contexts characterized by diffuse social relations, increasing specialization, the emergence of a civil society dichotomizing private and public spheres, and a general decline in the relationship between self and place create the conditions for modern selfhood as reflexively constituted by way of "open experience thresholds" (ibid.:146). The explanatory potential of this pre-modern/modern binary opposition or teleological progression loses considerable momentum when confronted with stories from Western and non-Western societies that reveal a tremendous capacity for living in modernities which reconcile the coexistence of so-called pre-modern and modern sources of selves.

There are important issues raised in attempts to use Western-derived modern genres of data collection in places like India. To begin with I had to ask: how are individualized selves expressed in Kerala society? Giddens argues that the near universal cross-cultural existence of the pronoun "I" proves that some idea of the individual appears in every society. Yet in informal daily speech situations in Kerala, people mostly avoid saying the word "I" (*ñān*) in favour of the more inclusive "we" (*nummaḷ*), which confirms that modes of expressing individuality vary considerably, and that widespread existence of a pronoun does not imply universal use. The avoidance of the first person is a way of deliberately keeping one's individuality discrete or seamlessly contiguous with the surrounding web of social relations. Silverstein refers to the extent to which communities are conscious of how linguistic signs create specific contexts for expressing social status and other identity markers as "metapragmatic awareness" (Silverstein 1993). For example, Duranti's analysis of Italian pronouns reveals how contrary to grammatical explanations for the omission of the subject in Italian syntax, there appears to be a strong correlation between positive and negative evaluations of subjects depending on the referential pronoun employed. According to Duranti, the more ambiguous the pronoun, the lower the status of the referent in a given speech event (1997:202). Similarly, in Malayali discourse, absence of the personal pronoun "ñān"(I) is a way of understating one's status in contrast with others who confidently begin sentences with ñān (I) and thus risk being interpreted as pretentiously drawing attention to themselves. In short, in addition to the type of pronoun used, active omission of a pronoun also has the potential to establish social contexts defined by equal or unequal status of participants. As a general rule, consistent use of the personal pronoun "I" by an individual is only considered acceptable in formal discourse, particularly when exercised by high status figures, including politicians, leaders of institutions, cultural and religious authorities, and respected celebrities. The absence of a universal use of the pronoun "I" suggests that Malayalis—who constitute a language community encompassing an infinite number of speech communities in themselves (Silverstein 1997)—navigate a different metapragmatic awareness of self-identity.

So does this mean that the self in Kerala is overshadowed by the importance vested in community? Why then does every home display portraits of deceased members of the family and celebrated individuals, and how do we explain the increasing popularity of Malayalam biographies and auto-biographies, or the widespread organization of competitions that publicly recognize individual achievements?

Clearly there is a concept of selfhood in Kerala society that does not conform to the Western division of the pre-modern and the modern, which suggests that interpretations of life stories should avoid reifying these labels. Instead, an acceptance of the subtleties and complexities of the coexistence of elements that appear to be modern or traditional as constitutive of a particular lived modernity offers a more empathetically productive line of inquiry (Gaonkar 2000; Chakrabarty 2002). In my work with Kerala consultants, fundamental adjustments in my thinking were required in the course of listening to oral histories in order to grasp the specific multi-dimensionality of selves in Kerala.

For example, I found that one way of reconciling the dichotomy between individuality and community was to conceive of life histories as family-centred projects, which in any case seemed to better represent what was happening in conversations in the field.[21] Consultants were rarely alone when I asked about ancestor's histories or their own, and so it was always a multi-vocal communicative event that took place within the framework of the family, which might include immediate members or extended kin. It was obvious that telling the history of one person was impossible without substantial interlocking references to the lives of other family members.

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[21] It is significant to add here that feudal rights and obligations in Malabar were based on relationships between families, not individuals (see Miller 1954:412). Hence any discussion about teyyam practices or other hereditary occupations inherently should involve families since isolating an individual apart from the family in interviews centred on these subjects would seem inappropriate, superficial, and incomplete due to the familial nature of the neo-feudal relations that have shaped family histories. This partly explains why people on the sidelines of an interview felt authorized to add their two sense when ever they felt that a topic could use clarification.

Moreover, my interest in the themes of social mobility and labour also led me to consider the family as the most important unit into which individual achievements or transgressions were absorbed. Hereditary musicality is transmitted through family ties and even the value of musical labour is often realized in the company of family, which includes the influence of ancestors whose presence is considered crucial when using hereditary artistic assets. This is consistant with Marriott's theory of South Indian selfhood as dividuation rather than individuation, which argues that the boundaries between South Asian selves and others are fluid and permeable in contrast with the bounded autonomy associated with Western personhood (Marriott and Inden 1974; Marriott 1976; also Daniel 1984). Thus life histories regularly became family histories even as individual variation maintained its specificity and agency. Nevertheless, despite important challenges involved with using modern textualizing genres born out of Western concepts of the self, I insist that incorporating life histories into socially-engaged research designs are not only appropriately feasible, but absolutely essential.

In the early 1980s Indian and non-Indian scholars formed the subaltern studies group and pioneered a movement for critiquing elitist colonial and neo-colonial (nationalist) historiography by recovering unwritten stories of people denied agency in the interpretation of the past. While historians did turn to oral accounts from the poor, people from marginalized regions, low castes, Dalits (scheduled castes), Adivasis (scheduled tribes), minority religious groups, and women, individual accounts were primarily used to consolidate theories aimed at explaining the role of groups in historical events. Class analysis was a dominant paradigm in the intellectual climate at that time due to the influence of Marxist historiography. Over the last two decades the movement has expanded to create more space for oral accounts that recognize individual authorship and experience. Without the representation of subaltern oral histories in Indic social science and humanist scholarship, there would be no historical trace of these people in the dominant narratives of history, since in many cases, stories passed down orally from one generation to the next are the only histories groups have (Blackburn and Arnold 2004).

Accordingly, research agendas that do not listen to and take seriously consultants' life stories risk glossing over individual and familial agencies and in the process, perpetuating the misconception that India is best understood as a kaleidoscope of social collectivities ranging over religions, castes, political parties, and villages, led by key political figures granted mythical status in dominant narratives. Due to their marginal socio-economic status rooted in Kerala's feudal system, most Malayan families share the common experience of subalternity and remain for the most part outside the growing middle-to-upper class ranks flourishing under the Indian government's restructuring measures[22] implemented under the 1993 New Economic Policy (Shurmer-Smith 2000). This explains why there are virtually no records of their histories outside of colonial and high caste sources, confirming that life stories are an indispensable methodological tool for understanding and representing subaltern modernities.

Videorecording: Intersecting Gazes Collaboratively

It was difficult at times to convince consultants in the field that I was not a "songcatcher" interested in recording a corpus of music to take back to a wealthy institution. Ethically, I had reservations about doing salvage ethnography in India and since it was not my priority anyway I rarely asked people to perform on my behalf. This left many of my consultants perplexed, suspicious, and perhaps disappointed in some cases (especially when there was a sense of exchange value attached to specific performance idioms established by previous researchers).

Even if collecting had been one of the objectives and time was not a factor, the repertory associated with rituals like teyyam is hereditary knowledge, and thus increasingly guarded against the threat of commodification and intellectual property violations by its bearers. Since the 1980s the attraction of folklorists, anthropologists, and performing artists to Malabar has steadily encouraged local communities to re-valorize cultural practices that were previously felt to be at odds with modern aspirations, which has resulted in an understandable protectionist reaction. Partly because I wanted to distance myself from the wave of scholarly interest in the cultural content of performing ritual and art traditions, I avoided stereotypical behaviours associated with collectors and this resulted in some misunderstandings until consultants realized I was not intending to record songs and that I was more interested in other modes of interaction, including listening to life histories. I regularly heard comments from people expressing disappointment and frustration over past misappropriations of cultural assets—an awareness that has undoubtedly been sharpened by popular Marxist ideas about exploitation.

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[22] A euphemism for deregulation, privatization, and disinvestment policies that drastically reduce the capacity of governments to influence national economies and control the environmental, social, and cultural impacts of profit-driven multinational corporations on local industries and lifestyles.

While my unexpected disinterest in collecting songs and other musical idioms helped me take a position that was to some extent distinct from other researchers, I still relied on standard recording equipment in the field and so I could not escape confronting the 'ethnographic gaze' and its uncomfortable implications for power relations. The use of recording media in any context has tremendous repercussion for social relations. They are quite frankly formidable instruments of power; video recorders are particularly violent due to their kinaesthetic capacity to freeze the sound and form of temporal and spatial experience. Stories that were recounted to me about conflicts between tourists/researchers and local people in Malabar were always centred on some transgression involving the use of video recorders.

Still relatively uncommon in northern Kerala, video recorders are treated regularly with suspicion, respect, intrigue, and even hostility. There are no universal protocols except for the need to ask about the particular protocol operative in any given situation. More important than the presence of the camera, it was essential to be aware of the impact of the person operating the camera. I came across many situations where Malayalis boldly displayed and wielded cameras at the centre of religious activities and shrines without receiving any reprimands. The act elicited in most cases subtle disapproval in the form of expressions and quiet commentary, but it was nonetheless tolerated, which may not have been the case for a non-Malayali. There is a sense that religious events in Kerala constitute common property and therefore, as embedded stakeholders, many people treat highly sensitive rituals as public (for Malayalis) domain and this is tolerated. The ubiquitous use of the word "folk" as a genre designation for diverse religious traditions from equally distinctive communities invokes the nineteenth century ideology of a common cultural essence and heritage shared by all members of a nation.

Nationalist secular appropriations of religious symbols notwithstanding, in the case of teyyam, the use of cameras is contentious even for Malayalis since the living tangible presence of a divinity is believed to be established in a human medium through a complex ritual of transmigration. Teyyam ceremonies are unique in the sense that everyone, regardless of caste, religion, gender, ethnic or other affiliation, is welcome in the ritual arena and permitted to interact with deities in their human form. However, Hindus still expect the kind of controlled deferential behaviour that is mandatory in Brahminical temples where witnessing the physical form of deities as a blessing in the form of *darśan* is viewed as the most sacred of exchanges between deities and devotees. For this reason it is usually an experience exclusively reserved for Hindus and indeed some scholars have gone so far as to convert to Hinduism in part to gain access to otherwise inaccessible social spaces (Groesbeck 1995; Caldwell 1999). In the teyyam arena there is considerable potential for conflict in a situation where everyone is allowed entry and interaction without proper briefing on protocols. At stake are both the sacred images of a living deity and the social interactions between devotees, ritual specialists, and the spirit world. Film captures all of this, which makes it the best tool for researchers who only have a limited period of time to study in the field. However, in the process the act of filming establishes a boundary between those who wield the technological power to take sounds and images that do not belong to them and those who are subjected to this, often without granting permission.

The ethical issue of consent was fairly straightforward in Malabar as far as how one should proceed to ensure that the use of a video camera would be permissible or not. In my experience there were always two groups whose permission was required to record during ritual events: patrons and performers. In many cases only the former's consent was officially necessary, although ethically it would have been unthinkable to go ahead without consulting performers beforehand, since it was predominantly their bodies captured on film. On both sides there is a hierarchy of authority that should be respected if the permission is to be accepted, at least tacitly if not openly, by all members of both groups. But no protocol or authority can resolve the issue of power and its implications in the act of recording by researchers from affluent Western societies.

Thus the researcher is confronted with an uncomfortable predicament. Besides the basic question, to use or not to use a camera, there are several other important decisions to be made, including, how, where, for how long, and when the intrusion of a camera is worth the risk of: 1) offending sensibilities that are not a part of the authoritative power structure; and 2) constraining the researcher's capacity to position him or herself differently as someone other than a Western tourist (*sāyippŭ*: European man; from *saheb*). There are no easy answers to the range of ethical and self-serving procedural questions this predicament raises, as each move in the field is contingent on the specific constellation of social relations and meanings involved. Nevertheless, I wish to highlight one strategy that I felt was effective in getting around some of the issues, or at least the magnitude thereof, concerning the use of recording media in the field. It entails temporarily giving the control of recording equipment over to consultants and encouraging them to film what they feel is important.

While there are obvious material and social risks involved in such a tactic, in my experience the benefits outweighed the possibility of something going wrong. First, there is a substantial, if only liminal, transfer of power that happens when recording instruments symbolizing status, wealth, and authority pass from researcher to consultant. The project of documenting an event inevitably becomes more collaborative as interactions, forms and objects, personalities, and other features that may not have been given prominence due to limitations or biases from the researcher's standpoint become a part of the story the recording tells. For all the ink spilled on ways of making fieldwork more sensitive and capable of eliciting insider perspectives on topics there is a level of immediacy here that curiously escapes or at least goes without mention in much ethnographic work. Needless to say, the circumstances under which this strategy would be feasible would vary depending on the context. A necessary precondition is the establishment of a minimal level of trust between the researcher and consultant(s), which can then serve as a basis for sharing the use of technology to produce a documentation of an event that is the property of both sides. It should be clear that I am not talking about formal collaborative projects between representatives of institutions, but rather spontaneous collaborations that depend only on social dynamics in the field.

To give an example from my fieldwork, in the course of doing research on the life history of a family in northern Kannur I came to know many immediate and extended members. In particular I had several meetings with the eldest man in the family at his home and at the small temple shrines where teyyam is performed. During my visits, there were always children and other men and women who participated directly or indirectly in my project and so I became familiar to most in the family. Since teyyam is still exclusively a hereditary occupational and spiritual occasion in which all members play a role, most family members related to the Malayan performers were present at the rituals I attended. On one occasion during the period between important rituals I decided to show Vaisakh (then 12 years old), the grandson of the senior man of the household, K.P.C Panikkar, how to work the video camera. He responded enthusiastically with careful attentiveness when I demonstrated the basics, and I soon realized that he had an intuitive talent that extended beyond the operation of the camera to framing and capturing scenes he felt were essential for understanding the complex interactive flow of actions unfolding. In the end he filmed an entire cassette of valuable information that provided a separate insider's perspective on diverse aspects of the festival occasion. Moreover, the protocol regulating Vaisakh's participation was guided by family and so he was able to position himself appropriately to film interactions that I instinctively avoided because of my identity as a Western male researcher. The partnership was productive because we were able to document a family's ritual tradition collaboratively, but more importantly it diffused some of the questions the family had about my sincerity, which made it easier to build friendships rather than merely professional contacts (fig. 11).

By highlighting an anecdote disclosing one way Vaisakh and I broke down the boundaries explicitly marked by use of recording instruments, I stress the imperative of minimizing the subject/object dichotomy and keeping people, their concerns and expectations at the centre of research agendas. To be sure, the idea of inviting consultants to use equipment in the field is not new (Balikci 1985), though it is the kind of exchange that typically appears in anthropological diaries rather than monographs. But I suggest the possibility of incorporating this tactic into the formal bag of methodological tools at ethnographers' disposal: for its collaborative commitment and potential to mitigate disparities in power relations, but also for its concrete results characterized by an unparalleled level of immediacy and veracity.

Is this empowerment? Certainly not in any lasting sense given the ephemeral bracketing of the interactive experience and ultimate control researchers exercise over the data that they gather and synthesize. Nonetheless, I would argue that the bracketed moment of empowerment is better than no opportunity for empowerment at all, and for me, that is enough to justify exploring how approaches like this can be more systematically applied in culturally-specific ethnographic research designs. Finally, the possibility for innovative forms of advocacy provides yet another justification for finding ways to decentre technology and authority. The documentary film, *Born into Brothels* (Briski 2004), which centres on an independent film maker's personal mission to use informal education in photography and art as a means for developing skills and self-confidence to escape poverty and prostitution in Calcutta gives some idea of the field of possibilities open to academic initiatives for putting this concept into practice.[23] Moving from technological mediation to human mediation I turn now to consider the active role of interpreters and translators in the ethnographic process, the third problematic related to fieldwork that I underline.

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[23] Despite the project's naïve, paternalistic, Euro-centric presumption that the best way forward is to lift children out of their poverty-stricken environment and dysfunctional family relations, not to mention the film's exaggerated claims of empowerment (Frontline 2005), it nonetheless provides one internationalized example of how de-centring technology and representation can snowball into much more applied concerns with advocacy. While it grossly oversimplifies what are in reality unbelievably complex social, political and economic problems, the film's subsequent metamorphosis into *Kids with Cameras* (www.kidswithcameras.org), a non-profit organization dedicated to raising awareness and funds for helping children through artistic media is innovative and potentially empowering.

Unsung Ethnographic Voicing: Interpreters and Translators

> The work of the European researchers of tribes would have been impossible without the often unheralded assistance of their Indian translators and collaborators.
> — Carol Babiracki, *Comparative Musicology and the Anthropology of Music*

Midway through my undergraduate programme in Canada and Northern Ireland, one question in particular left me feeling uncertain about ethnomusicology's epistemological basis: how do researchers engage in participant observation and interviewing in social contexts outside their linguistic community(ies)? This was an obvious question considering that the majority of ethnomusicological literature taught in courses feature people outside Anglophone, Francophone, or Germanophone communities, and yet most researchers belong to one of the above. When asked, most academics recognized that this was a problem, pointing to language training grants as the best solution. Still sceptical, I went on to do graduate studies in ethnomusicology and managed to secure a language training fellowship that enabled me to complete the equivalent of an introductory course in Malayalam, the official language of Kerala. After completing the course and fifteen months of fieldwork with considerable support from research assistants who became friends, and friends who became research assistants, I now realize that the language situation on the ground is far more complex and problematic than typically acknowledged. A better answer to the question above would emphasize the integral role of interpreters and translators as active facilitators helping to get beyond the formidable challenge of developing adequate levels of linguistic competency in the process of building human relationships and conducting research in the field.

The difference between these two branches of linguistic expertise requires elucidation, for they are not interchangeable though they are often treated as such. The confusion arises in part because individuals perform as both interpreters and translators, yet never in the same context, which explains in part why translation is widely used to describe both activities. A more appropriate, mutually exclusive use of these terms follows from the premise that interpretation is speech-centred whereas translation is text-centred (Roy 2000:23), their respective communicative events placing specific demands on the speech actors charged with the task of facilitating understanding between two or more participants in a speech event. While interpreters work in real time through oral modes of communicating that depend on suprasegemental carriers of meaning, or styles of speech, including tones, pitch, inflection, dynamics and stress, translators tend to work with texts where discourse in communicative events is fixed. Ethnographers working with languages other than their mother tongue typically require both interpretation and translation services in order to access meanings created through the researcher's interaction with consultants in the field. While some project's may rely on one person to do both tasks, this is frequently not feasible due to the incredibly exhausting and time-consuming nature of the work, which often requires a team of interpreters and translators in order to textualize the oral interview process into transcripts that then serve as a primary source for writing the monograph or thesis.

Where I worked in Southern India, the friends who helped me conduct interviews were not always the same individuals who translated transcripts. In this way I could benefit from individual strengths with some people having special skills and experiences developed through anthropological training that significantly aided my interaction with new consultants in the field (fig. 12), and others who were enrolled in English programs and were thus better equipped for translating. In the end, however, it often boiled down to who was available at a given point in time, and moreover, not one of my research assistants was trained professionally as a translator or interpreter, which I suspect is the case for most, if not all, ethnomusicologists who do fieldwork outside their linguistic community. Nevertheless, performing as an interpreter or translator means confronting most of the problems associated with these important roles. More importantly, the individual approaches, strengths, weaknesses, and insights of all those who participated in my project, had considerable bearing on the problem focus, methodology, and results of the project. Hence my argument that ethnographers engaged in cross-cultural social studies have consistently understated, even sublimated, the role of these instrumental creators and brokers of meaning in the collaborative project of doing ethnographic fieldwork (Qureshi 1999).

To further illustrate the point I turn to the influential volume, *Shadows in the Field* (1997), ethnomusicology's response to the postmodern critique of anthropology. Topics range from the methodological and the material, to the ontological, epistemological and ethical as the authors intersect in different ways with the experiential dynamics of working with diverse peoples in the field. Curiously, despite the fact that half of the contributors work with communities in which the first language is not the maternal language of the researcher, only one felt it was important to discuss the difficulties and challenges of working with interpreters.[24] Nicole Beaudry tellingly shares:

> Over the years I worked with a great many interpreters, and it is difficult to summarize this particular working condition simply. On the whole, it is my relationship with them that caused me the strongest conflicting emotions – frustration, anguish, and discomfort as well as joy, warmth, and thankfulness – in good part because these were the people that I spent most of my time with…. I first assumed that interpreters would simply translate for me and that I would remain in control of my mission. (Beaudry 1997:71)

She goes on to describe how elusive the expectation for control proved to be in the course of elaborating on the challenges and advantages of working with Inuit and Dene interpreters in the Arctic and sub-Arctic locations where she worked. Yet she resists reflecting on how interpreters actively shaped her results, thus contributing to the myth that research assistants merely provide a means to an end while denying them any agency in the creation of the end itself.

In another article focussed on the potential for developing self-reflexive experiential ethnography in a community of BaAke pygmies in equatorial Africa, Michelle Kisliuk discusses her relationship with a field assistant. She highlights the ethical challenges involved in establishing the economical basis of their arrangement, but oddly does not address the individual's role in communicative events. Instead, Kisliuk builds an image of herself as the sole mediator between consultants and her academic readership; in the process she presents her ethnographic experience as an unmediated dialogue between herself, her experience in the inscribed form as text, and the consultants who participated in her experience. Agency is solely her prerogative, which gives substance to the criticism that she hardly escapes the self-revelatory critique she sets out to disprove (1997:39). This illusion of immediacy provides the basis for her idea of three levels of conversation, between the researcher and the people, the researcher and the material of performance, and the meta conversation with the ethnography. In this scheme there are at least two levels of conversation glaringly omitted: the one between the research assistant (interpreter) and the consultants and the other between the interpreter and the researcher.

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[24] The index also confirms the curious absence of discussion dealing with the role of interpreters and translators; besides Shelemay's passing reference to the relationship between the authors of *Blessingway Singer* (Mitchell 1978) and their translator in her section on "memorializing tradition," Beaudry's article provides the only discussion.

Are claims about the ontological basis of ethnography tenable without addressing these additional levels of conversation? With all the talk of mediation, transmission, and translation in this volume, one would expect more critical engagement with these levels of conversation through acts of interpretation and translation that inform experiences researchers appear to metaphorically "translate" into ethnographies. More than a symptom of the hyper-reflexivity that defined this important, if narcissistic moment in the discipline, this volume makes plain the chronic failing on the part of researchers to accurately portray webs of relations and mediations, in particular as they involve those who make productive fieldwork possible by their indispensable contributions to interpretive projects.

To be sure, one of the reasons why ethnomusicologists have been reluctant to reflect on the role of interpreters can be traced to the representational crisis that Clifford brilliantly summarized in his *The Predicament of Culture* (1988). At the core of this critique was calling into question ethnographic authority and the idea, rooted in the objectivism of positivist thinking, that it was possible to treat the ethnographic project as a pseudo-scientific experiment. The illusion finds apt expression in what Clifford famously described as "partial truths" (1986). Confronting the agency of interpreters in shaping the researcher's understanding and conceptual framework exposes a lack of control over variables and ergo undermines the authority and credibility of the researcher. Going further, markets and intellectual property are at stake more than ever before and the pressure to publish as much as possible in order to advance one's career is unprecedented. Shortcuts are taken and usually the result is less time spent in the field, which means less opportunity to improve linguistic competency in local languages.

Whereas in the past it was more acceptable to spend several years in the field for the purpose of developing an adequate level of language proficiency and competency, such extended periods have become less feasible, which means language abilities rarely reach the level needed to conduct unmediated fieldwork. There appears to be a pervasive sense of insecurity among ethnographers in general and this manifests itself in widespread avoidance of questions related to the agency of interpreters in the field and the potential impacts on the mode and exegesis of enquiry. The silencing of this productive level of collaboration between scholars and their research assistants, combined with a general devaluing of the labour of interpretation and translation through the common misconception that the trade involves passive transmission rather than active creation, has succeeded in escaping critical scrutiny for too long.

Under a language training fellowship held in the year prior to my first trip to India, I completed the equivalent of an introductory course in the Dravidian language, Malayalam, the official language of Kerala. Besides learning to read, write, and pronounce all sounds in the alphabet and develop a basic working vocabulary, beginner speakers of Indo-European languages who learn Malayalam are confronted with the additional challenge of reorienting how they approach grammar in practice. I have already mentioned above how Malayalam is a highly situational language whose spoken dialects and, to a certain extent even written forms, do not require all the components that make up a complete sentence in English or French if it is clear by the context what is being referred to (Moag 1980). This flexibility enables fairly rapid progress (once the basic sounds and vocabulary are mastered) at engaging in short economical bursts of conversation that do not require extensive vocabulary. In general Malayalis are for the most part extremely accommodating and forgiving when it comes to making mistakes in efforts to engage in everyday speech. In this way my language training was an essential tool for establishing trust and rapport through unmediated relationships with consultants, but this was far from the level required for approaching the substance and sensitivity of oral histories or semi-structured interviews, nor were my abilities adequate for understanding most of the interaction happening in a given communicative event.

This is not to say that my unmediated visits or interactions with consultants were unproductive, rather the goals were different. On the contrary, direct informal communication often led to some of the most salient insights over tea, meals, during music lessons, or at religious events. However, for more formal interview settings there were no options but to find reliable intermediaries and in the end I worked with several translators and interpreters, most of whom made a distinctive contribution or imprint on my decisions, interaction, networks, agendas, results, and analyses. Like Beaudry, the dynamics and conditions of the relationships were a tremendous source of anxiety and growth, as my own frustration over the loss of control forced me to listen and learn from those who agreed to assist me in my goals. But I wish to go further than Beaudry and specify more explicitly some of the modalities of influence that these individuals exercised in the course of my fieldwork.

First, the identity of the interpreter had tremendous implications for the interpersonal dynamics of the interview process. My concept of identity here includes both relatively fixed attributes that point to collective affiliations, including, gender, caste, religion, and socio-economic background, and individual qualities, including personalities, dispositions, and acumen. Both levels of identity were operative for everyone participating in communicative situations that unfolded through my research design. On the whole, my experience suggests that some broad generalizations can be deduced concerning the balance of advantages and disadvantages in a given context. Immediately the picture of the interpreter's role becomes infinitely more complex when we take into consideration these levels of identity, as the ability to speak two languages and thus transmit information must be carefully weighed against factors that can influence the quality and quantity of important information that is shared.

For instance, if one shows up at a Malayan home with an interpreter who is a respected member of the high caste former landowning family to which the Malayan family is hereditarily attached, the protocol, mood, stakes, and content of the interaction will not be the same as if one arrived with an interpreter from a caste with the same ritual status as the Malayan. Neo-feudal relationships between patrons and performers are still operative, though much more discrete, and so researchers must inevitably keep this in mind in order to understand their enabling and limiting potential.

In the case of a Malayan woman that I interviewed at her home in Kannur district, our meetings were organised and mediated by a friend who was a high status member of a landowning family that patronized her family for generations. Her mother delivered him at birth in fulfillment of her family's obligation and right to provide midwifery services to his family, and so she knew him and the protocols that regulated their interaction well. When we would arrive she would greet him with warm smiles and would call him *tamburān*, meaning king/prince in Malayalam. He would treat her with respect for her status as a senior woman, daughter of the woman who brought him into the world, and he told me he would give them small amounts of money periodically. The account points to how neo-feudal bonds between families are reaffirmed in the process of recreating the patron-client relations that legitimize his status as a benevolent protector of the common people.

My visit was absorbed into this exchange: she was doing him a favour by performing (in this sense sharing aspects of her life history and occupational activities) for us and in exchange I offered a consultant fee. Even though the money came from my project on this particular occasion, the likelihood is that in her mind, the interpreter—the tamburān—was the one who brought us to her home, which carried economic benefits for her and symbolic benefits for both of them. Another example of the tension inherent in this kind of dominant-subordinate relationship on the text generated by the interview became apparent through closer listening in the process of writing up the transcript. At one point when I asked about how her family acquired the property that she now lived on, she responded that it was given to her by the *dēvasvam bharaṇam* (Devasvam Board; temple administration) or temple authorities, as part of her inalienable right. However, my friend emphasized through his interpretation that his family gave the land to her family. He thus used his role as an intermediary to make her version [illegible] the story conform more to his understanding of their relationship and thereby influenced my understanding of her life history.

The historical asymmetrical relations between these two families clearly presented limitations to the kinds of topics we could discuss. Politics, in particular, would not have been an appropriate or productive subject to raise, since my friend's family were long-time Congress supporters and the majority in the area, especially the lower castes, Adivasis and Dalits, voted for the Communist Party (Marxist). So even though it was an important goal in my enquiry to find out how music and politics intersected among the Malayan, through this interpreter it was not possible to engage these topics. On the other hand, I was able to observe neo-feudal relations in practice and discuss many other topics related to the history of the area as a result of working through my friend. Moreover, higher castes typically tend to have better access to English medium schools and English media in general and consequently are much more fluent speakers, which enabled me to participate more assertively in the interview process as the interpretations occurred more regularly and fluently.

Most interpreters that I worked with did not have this level of fluency, but because their caste identity was more closely related to the Malayan in terms of their social and ritual status, we were able to talk more openly about politics, conflict, and musical participation in new venues. With one interpreter I worked with, fluency and Dalit affiliation came together to create some of the most compelling interviews as families felt comfortable with him as intermediary and I was able to keep more control over the direction of the topic as a result of fluid interpretations.

Gender relations introduce another set of complicated issues and carry a separate level of protocol in most social settings. Only once was it appropriate for a woman to interpret on my behalf, and in that case, it was within the protective milieu of her family environment. Most of the time I worked with male interpreters. As a male researcher working in a conservative, patriarchal gender-segregated social context in India, it was simply not acceptable for women to travel with a foreign man to unknown households and festivals, and moreover, most of my consultants were men also. The above example of C, however, was an exception, and in such situations when I had an opportunity to invite a female member of the family to share her opinions or knowledge of a topic, it helped to diffuse some of the formalities when I emphasized my married status and Laure participated in the interview process. Throughout the period of fieldwork, there was a level of intimacy or identification based on gender roles that was easily facilitated between Laure and women in the families I visited, and these relationships greatly expanded my window onto their social histories and lives on many occasions.[25]

In considering the role of interpreters and translators in and out of the field it is helpful to conceptualize their discursive actions as separate transcripts that in some instances may approach a form of co-authorship, and to consider their influence on the interview process in terms of identity politics and culturally-determined protocols governing interpersonal relations.

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[25] It is now a well known fact that two of the most celebrated anthropologists in the history of the field, Victor Turner and Clifford Geertz, owed a significant amount of their data to the relationships established with women by their wives (Wiener 1999).

D. Where I Stand: A Reflexive Note

It has become common practice in anthropology and ethnomusicology to provide some autobiographical note to remind readers that the topic of research was engaged from a particular standpoint with an agenda guided by both personal and academic goals and histories. In keeping with this convention, it seems appropriate to share that I come from a middle class, white background in rural south-eastern Ontario. Growing up in a small village in a region where Otherness is largely defined by linguistic boundaries, English or French, Christian, Catholic or Protestant, or ethnic, Aboriginal versus non-Aboriginal, my first exposure to musical and cultural differences outside of these distinctions and North American pop culture came through exposure to other ethnic communities from Montreal that visited a local provincial park regularly in the summer. On local beaches along the St. Lawrence River I heard South Asian, East Asian, Middle Eastern, and Latin American music for the first time and was curious. That curiosity—channelled through experience as a music student and performer of classical, popular, and celtic music idioms—carried me through my Bachelor of Music years and eventually led me to the field of ethnomusicology.

My introduction to anthropology at the Queen's University of Belfast in Northern Ireland made me increasingly more conscious of the political and economic uses of music and the stakes facing music makers. By the time I entered graduate school at the University of Alberta, I was prepared to ask critical questions about how music is used and under what social conditions and relations. During this period I recognized that musicians working in tourism arenas constituted a relatively unexplored topic with global implications and impacts. In the interdisciplinary milieu of a department with strong intersections of Marxist and music scholarship, I became more interested in the theoretical limitations and possibilities of engaging with mode of production theory as a tool for investigating the political economy of musicians. Departmental area strengths in South Asia led me to explore possible regions for doing fieldwork in India and during this time I learned about Kerala through a Malayali friend, a graduate student from Kerala.

I was intrigued by the state's robust tourism industry, passionate political scene (especially Marxist), and high level of social development—three regional dynamics that significantly shaped my research design. Coming from a family that has benefited from a Canadian value system open to the possibility of social mobility, I was drawn to find out more about how lower and middle class families use music to improve their position in Kerala society. My background and theoretical orientation encouraged prioritizing interesting social patterns rather than affinities for types of music, and thus I was only secondarily concerned with prospects for collecting/preserving musical heritage, mastering a musical instrument or tradition, or mapping a new musical area. Accordingly, a people-centred paradigm guided my project throughout this journey and its postfield ruminations.

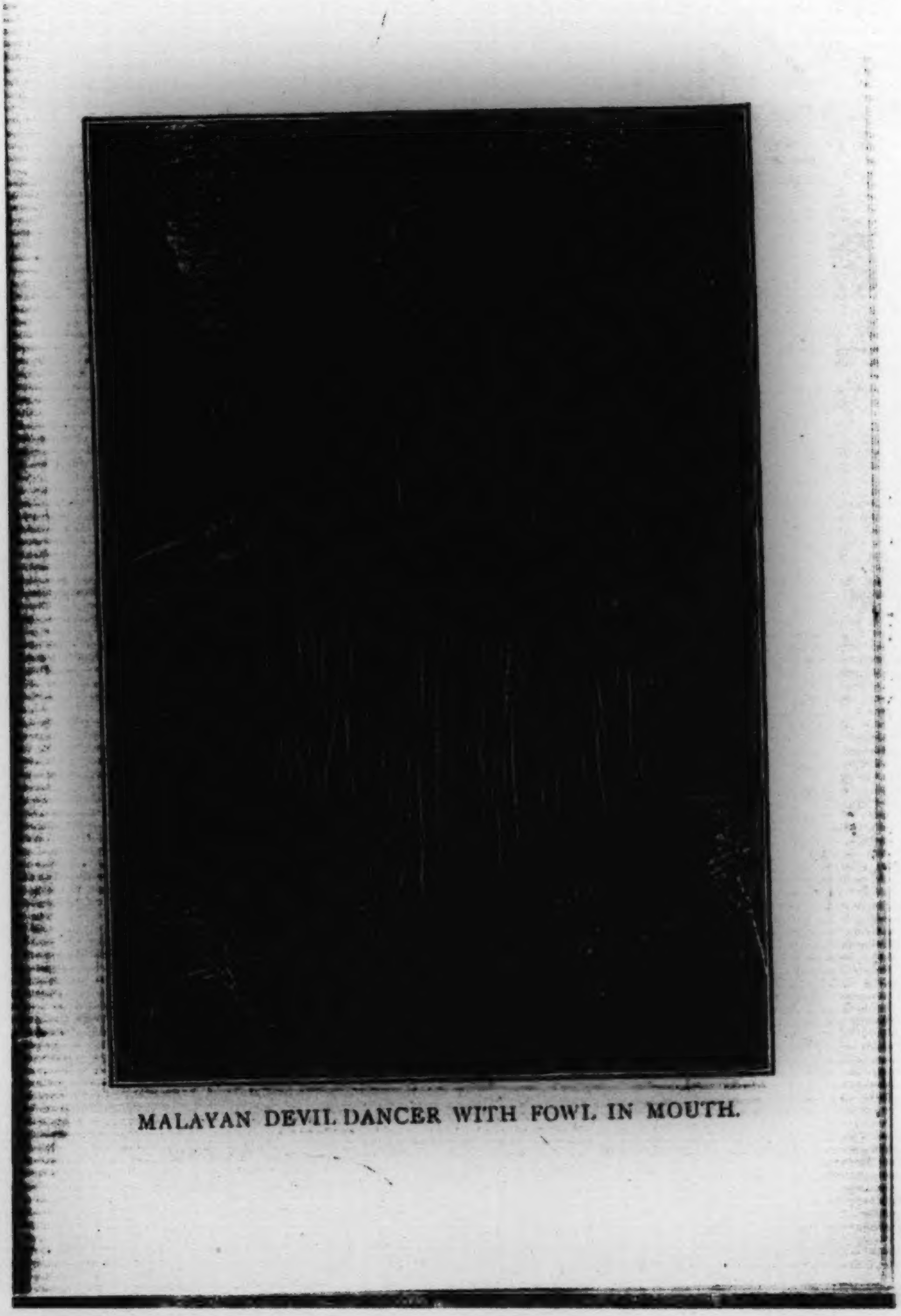
MALAYAN DEVIL DANCER WITH FOWL IN MOUTH.

Figure 6. The first illustration of a teyyam performer from Thurston's entry on the Malayan in *Castes and Tribes of Southern India* (1909)

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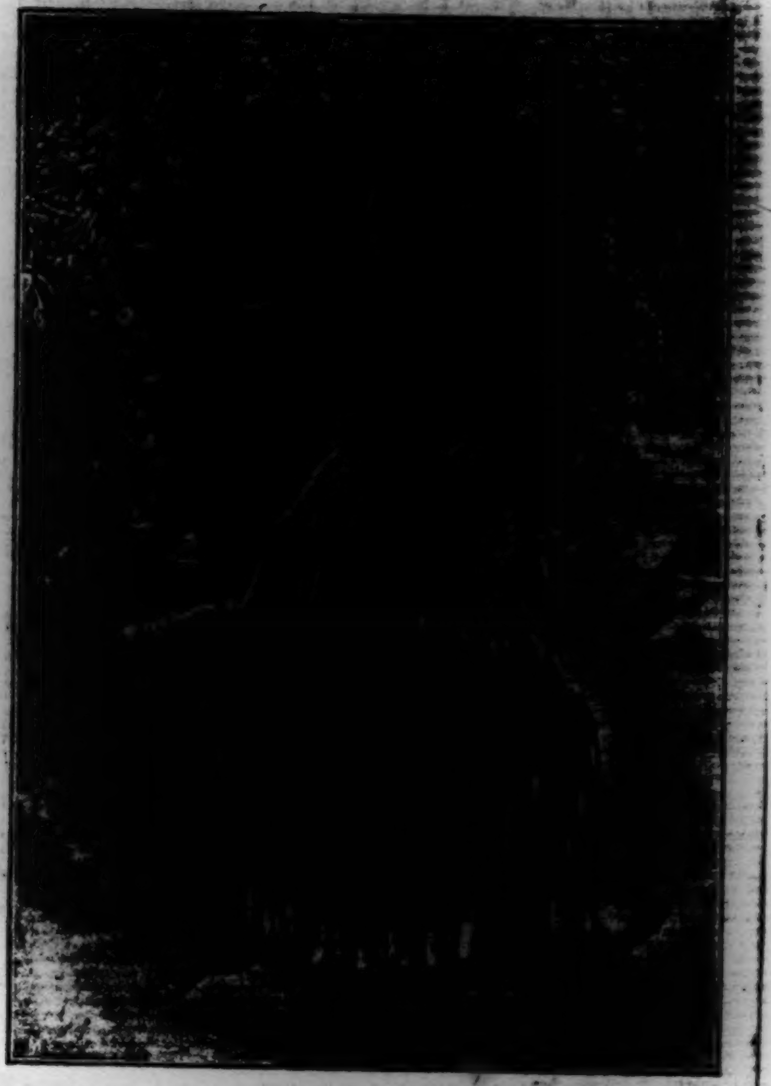

MALAYAN DEVIL-DANCER.

Figure 7. Second illustration of a Malayan teyyam performer in Thurston (1909)

MALAYAN DEVIL-DANCERS.

Figure 8. Third illustration of Malayan teyyam performers in Thurston (1909)

Districts of Kerala
KANNUR

Figure 9. Kannur District Tourism Promotional Council Brochure, 2001

Figure 10. Swamidasan's musical family performing a light classical song in the music room at their home in Kathirur. Rija is singing (left), accompanied by her brothers, Rajesh, on the keyboard (centre), and Jitesh, on tabla (right)

Figure 11. Vaisakh films his great-aunt (Nani) and second cousin (Suresh Panikkar) with my video camera while they sing the *tōṯṯam* song for Uccițța Bhagavati

Figure 12. Interpreter, research associate, and friend—Hareendran takes notes in between sections of an informal interview session. His anthropological training (Kannur University) was invaluable in the field

CHAPTER 3

SITUATING MALAYAN HEREDITARY MUSICALITY

To speak of collective musicality is to uneasily presume an insider concept of music that mirrors a Western aesthetic concept of sound. Therefore, some fleshing out or qualifying of my use of the term is necessary from the outset in order to distance Malayan concepts from the Eurocentric semantic baggage "music" carries. I consider musicality to be the bundle of practical capabilities and knowledge that informs embodied Malayan dispositions to use sound tactfully in different ways according to a highly accomplished sonic sensibility. The term also invokes the material culture through which this type of musical habitus realizes expression. That musicality is hereditary points to the process by which the bundle of assets is transmitted and the context of positionings in which it is recreated. The aim in this chapter is to describe this toolkit and, more importantly, consider how it is put to use in the neo-feudal socio-religious arrangement of teyyam ritual arenas.

In order to appreciate the historical and oral world the Malayan invoke to describe themselves, their family, and caste identities in the course of building musical reputations, I begin by discussing stories of origins, tales unfolding in strategies of coherence that range from the mythical, natural, to the socio-historical. Then I move to describe the hereditary toolkit followed by the aesthetic conceptual knowledge base. After an excursion into the domain of pedagogy—in which I contrast my own participant-observation discipleship with those described in oral histories centred on learning the tools and ways of the trade—I conclude with a brief discussion of the relationship between music and ritual. But before I enter the main body of the chapter, it is useful to further clarify my conception of the term musicality in relation to the Malayan hereditary context.

In order to sustain a unifying disciplinary object of study, the term "music" continues to provide an *a priori* lexicon for investigating what Blacking elastically coined "humanly organized sound" (1973). Predictably, the use of a European concept of music to describe non-Western sound idioms risks blanketing over insider categories that provide the key to understanding "the many different ways in which individuals and social groups make sense of what they or someone else regard as 'music'" (Blacking 1995:225). For example, the words Malayan use to describe how they ritualize teyyam ceremonies with sound are not seamlessly translated as musical acts, though they overlap with Western equivalents in some areas more than others. For instance, when Malayan discuss how they perform the body of expressive oral texts that establish the presence of the deity in the body of the medium they do not use the Malayalam (Sanskrit-derived) word for music, *sangīttam*, or even the verb 'to sing,' *pāṭuka*. Instead they most frequently invoke the term *colluka*, which corresponds more closely to the verbs, to chant or to recite, even though for Western ears the expressive idiom bears closer resemblance to singing. Hence the conceptual gap has little to do with the criteria for describing tonal aesthetic qualities and more to do with how sounds are put to use in specific situations framed by particular forms of sociality and religiosity, which calls to mind Chernoff's focus on African sonic frames of reference as a way of "understanding the meaning of cultural differences" (1979:33). One of the main differences between classical singing and teyyam singing is the purpose of musical production, the locutionary act, to borrow from Austin's speech act terminology (1962).

The concept of "music" in all its permutations cannot be unproblematically applied to Indian sound idioms; rather it should be carefully translated in order to expose the cleavages that distinguish culturally-specific ideas about creative sound patterns and uses. This is the reason why I prefer to think of Malayan musicality as stylized sound praxis, though for pragmatic purposes I continue to use music, musicians, and other categories belonging to the lexicon of music scholarship. A further distinction is helpful as a way of separating the Western and Indian bourgeois aesthetic of *art* music from a Malayan worldview that emphasizes the foundation of collective musicality in an occupational, *artisanal* social productive arrangement in which special knowledge about ritual uses of sound is the foundation of a trade just like any other (Neuman 1985). In his landmark *Culture and Society* ([1958] 1993) Williams cogently sketches the pivotal moment in nineteenth-century Europe in which art became resignified as a contemplative object with profound consequences for its artisans, the producers:

> An *art* had formerly been any human skill; but *Art*, now, signified a particular group of skills, the 'imaginative' or 'creative' arts. *Artist* had meant a skilled person, as had *artisan*; but *artists* now referred to these

> selected skills alone… Art came to stand for a special kind of truth… and artist for a special kind of person… A new name, *aesthetics*, was found to describe the judgement of art, and this, in its turn, produced a name for a special kind of person—*aesthete*. *The arts*—literature, music, painting, sculpture, theatre—were grouped together in this new phrase, as having something essentially in common which distinguished them from other human skills. The same separation as had grown up between *artists* and *artisan* grew up between *artist* and *craftsman*. (Williams [1958] 1993:xv-xvi)

The point I make is that Malayan artistry and musicality has more in common with the labour of "art" than the bourgeois way of listening that developed in Europe between 1750 and 1850 (Goehr 1992; Johnson 1995; Gramit 2002), and in India a century later on the crest of the nationalist movement (Powers 1996; Subramanian 2006; Weidman 2006). However, the choice to use the term artist in the creative sense of an artisan should not be viewed as situating Malayan as pre-modern in a teleological trajectory of progress; they continue to find new space for their collective musical praxis in the landscape of alternative modernities, even as they reproduce the hereditary context that nourishes musicality as a set of occupational capabilities. I turn now to explore sites where the Malayan and non-Malayan locate this remarkable sonic acumen, from mythical places where powerful Gods are healed through song, to the natural immanence of embodied artistry.

A. Origins: Mythical and Immanent Foundations

In northern Malabar it is common knowledge that the Malayan possess natural musical, artistic, and healing abilities. The compound word employed to describe this process of hereditary transmission is *janmasiddham*, literally meaning that which is determined or accomplished instinctively, from the noun *janmam*, birth, and the adjective *siddha*, accomplished or obtained. Malayalis often translate the word janmasiddham as "in-born" to extend their association with hereditary musicality substantively beyond what might otherwise be viewed as a stereotypical gloss. This is consistent with broader Hindu beliefs about the ontology of caste, which insist that "capabilities and potentialities are in nature not in nurture" (Stern [1993] 2003:61). Malayan reputation for being fine performers and musicians capable of handling diverse musical idioms is widely known, especially in the northern districts of Malabar where they are predominantly settled. As the case studies featured in chapter five illustrate, Malayan families have extended this reputation by successfully entering performance venues and settings that would have been inaccessible half a century earlier due to caste discrimination and lack of training opportunities. Reflecting on my experience discussing caste musical reputations with non-Malayans, one anecdote in particular underscores the extent to which Malayan identity is considered synonymous with the development of outstanding musicality that has expanded outside traditional contexts.

During the festivities of an annual non-Brahminical temple festival in the village where we lived, we (Laure and I) visited relatives of a friend and at one point I mentioned my interest in learning more about the musical abilities of the Malayan community. Hearing this, the members of the family acknowledged that the link was true and one woman replied that she was certain that her Karnatic music teacher at the Thalassery Institute of Music was a Malayan, declaring he "sings so beautifully, he must be Malayan." Fascinated by a possible connection to a prestigious cultural institute yet puzzled that no one I had met from the Malayan community had mentioned this, I arranged to meet her at the school the following week so that she could introduce me to the man whom she believed was Malayan.

After meeting with him a few times and inquiring about his history through my contacts in the Malayan community I soon discovered that in fact the man belonged to the same community as the woman, the low-caste numerically dominant Tiyya. Although his family originally came from the neighbouring district of Wayanad, he belonged to the largest Hindu community in Kerala and the highest in the hierarchy of lower castes (now officially classified under Other Backward Classes). The confusion surrounding the identity of one of the most respected musical figures in Kannur district and the fact that exceptional musicality indexed a caste group and not the other way round, underscores how entangled Malayan associations with music have become in popular consciousness.

Although it seems reasonable to interpret the meaning of *janmasiddham* as congruent with Western descriptions of individuals who appear naturally gifted with certain talents or intelligences, the culturally-specific implications of the term require more elucidation. To appreciate the meaning of the concept for Keralites, and particularly for Malayan, it is necessary to go beyond a Western dualistic way of thinking that stresses the combined determinacy of social and biological (genetic) factors in explanations of trans-generational patterns of distinctive cultural practices. The nature-nurture dichotomy simply does not account for significant gaps between Malayan, non-Malayan Indian, and non-Indian views on how in-born musical capabilities come into being.

First of all, distinctive South Asian cultural structures through which socialization takes place have created different environmental conditions for nurturing or discouraging cultural affinities in India. The idea that affiliated individuals possess natural abilities through socialization or genetics takes on new significance in a society where marriage is strictly regulated by rules of group endogamy (marrying within the group), lineage exogamy (marrying outside the mother's lineage), and in many cases, cross-cousin marriage (marriages between cousins whose parents are siblings of the opposite sex), which ensure that collective cultural knowledge and genetic distribution remain within the community (Damodaran 1998:33). In Kerala, as in other parts of the Indian Subcontinent, a segmented social structure was established by Indian feudalism, and by the late-Medieval period society was roughly divided into occupational groups known as *jātis*, which became more rigidly defined as castes following prolonged contact with European colonizing nations. Although most scholars now acknowledge that the inflexibility of caste boundaries was exaggerated under colonial administrations, shared occupational knowledge passed down over generations remains more or less intact due to strong social prohibitions against marrying outside one's community and creative adaptation to new socio-economic circumstances. As one successful Malayan professor puts it, the decline in feudal sources of patronage "does not mean musical heritability died down, rather it was diverted to other channels" (Kannan 2004). The innateness or naturalness attributed to Malayan musicality must be understood in the context of strict observance of group endogamy and the implications this has for socialization and genetic inheritance, as well as against the background of new patronage opportunities.

Besides qualifying the social-biological dichotomy with Indian terms of reference, it is also necessary to expand the framework to include the mythical and divine origins to which Malayan attribute their musical acumen. Chapter one began with a telling of the Malayan myth of origin in which the community is portrayed as having fulfilled an important role as traditional healers through their ritual use of sound. In all versions of the story that were told to me, a Malayan couple is either created or recruited to cure the great Hindu god, Shiva, of the evil eye (literally "black eye" in Malayalam), an affliction caused by malevolent spirits following excessive envy towards an object of great beauty or admiration.[26] In most cases Shiva inflicts himself with the evil eye after vainly admiring his form while gazing into a mirror (Vishnunamboodiri 1998). A Malayan man and woman successfully remove the harmful spirits, which they accomplish through a combination of herbal remedies and a powerful idiom of chant invocations in Sanskrit known as *mantras* during which the names of deities are repeated in stylized form (Kinsley [1982] 1993; Beck 1995). Malayan status and authority as traditional healers capable of treating different types of afflictions using sound are rooted in this myth of how Shiva was cured.

The general body of knowledge associated with traditional Malayan healing practices falls under the broader Indian set of religious practices and beliefs of indigenous sorcery called *mantravādam*. Considering the role of sound in mantravādam, the term tellingly derives from two words both denoting forms of oral communication. While *mantra* refers to the formula of repetitive chants believed to have the power to invoke supernatural presence, *vādam* denotes discourse, conversation, and argumentation. Going further, vādam closely resembles both *vadyam*, the word for musical instrument in Sanskrit and Malayalam, and *vāddhyār*, meaning a family priest, which points to a strong etymological connection between sound, orality, and ritual authority. Though the collection of strophic songs known as *kaṇṇēṟupāttŭ*, or songs for the evil eye, is rarely used today to protect people from malevolent forces, it continues to be an important source for linking sound, the Malayan, and ritual knowledge—thereby legitimizing the divine origins of the community's musical healing capabilities.

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[26] For a thorough introduction to the geographical range of belief in the evil-eye see Dundes ([1981] 1992).

At the beginning of chapter one, Suresh Panikkar singled out Nambūtiri Brahmins as important patrons of kaṉṉēṟupāttŭ in his oral account, which raises two key questions: how did Brahmins and high-castes become patron communities for Dalit traditional healers?; and second, how do they interpret insider rationales for explaining Malayan heightened musicality? To gain a perspective on the mystical and musical associations with the Malayan from other Hindu communities it is helpful to return to Kerala's feudal system and the doctrine of purity and pollution.

Nambūdiri Brahmins are also famous for their musical and ritual acumen. In addition to their expertise in reciting elaborate repertories of oral chants from the Vedas as part of their religious responsibilities (Howard 2000), they are primary custodians of prestigious idioms of classical musical expression in Southwestern India. Yet even despite having a monopoly over knowledge of written Vedic ritual traditions and even sorcery (mantravādam) in some rare cases (Fawcett [1900] 2001), they still required ritual services from the Malayan community. The doctrine of purity and pollution established by Brahminical Vedic texts provides a compelling explanation for the symbiotic relationship between Dalit service and caste Hindu communities. All of the ritual duties and responsibilities performed by the Malayan under the feudal system had essentially one purpose: to remove polluting substances from the home of a higher caste family in exchange for subsistence. Services included removing tangible pollution such as bodily substances as a result of delivering babies, or intangible pollution in the form of afflictions and undesirable spirit presence in the dwelling sites and bodies of higher castes. Though Malayan are considered to be near the bottom of the social hierarchy, their hereditary occupational services do not involve providing agricultural labour, and they derived a higher status as a result of their esoteric ritual trade. In particular, their ability to mitigate the intensely creative power (*śakti*) of local Goddesses and the unpredictable actions of dangerous spirits and local manifestations of pan-Hindu Gods was essential for treating afflicted households and individuals.

Freeman explains how some highly polluting castes gained leverage through service as a source of tremendous power. Providing indispensable agencies for removing the pollution from Brahmin and other high caste households, ex-untouchable communities acted as midwives and spirit mediums for low-caste deities or versions of high caste Gods:

> The dependence of the upper castes upon the specialists in these matters gave the latter a kind of power, often clearly recognized; and as we have seen, any kind of marked ability or capacity in this society inevitably claims its source in sacred power. The result is that despite upper caste designations, these 'demons' were, from the lower-caste perspective, not demonic at all, but their powerful and empowering gods. And even from the Brahmanical perspective, these demonic forces of 'nature' were powerful beings with whom one had, regrettably enough, to reckon. (Freeman 1991:632)

The ritual power of the Malayan and their indispensable role as mediators of pollution afforded them a higher status in the hierarchy and consequently, a slightly better tenure arrangement with local power structures as well as access to normally restricted high caste spaces in homes, courts, and temples. Moreover, they could rely on this status to reinforce their position in disputes with other higher castes on whom they depended for their livelihoods.

The case of the Malayan mirrors that of the *Vēḷār* community of potters in the Madurai area who use specialized knowledge of ways to worship local deities to make themselves as indispensable as possible to their landowning patrons (Inglis 1985:100). The cornerstone of their collective occupational strength is their expertise in the area of creativity as both a means and an end: they create the proper material form required to encourage supernatural beings to enable the agrarian prosperity and successful procreation of the larger community of castes in a village. Commenting on the unique position of craftspeople in South India, Inglis perceptively summarizes:

> Vēḷār skills of creativity allow them to deal directly with the deities who control creativity in a way which few other humans could. They know how to prepare not only a vessel that can be filled but also one that can be emptied. Their special skills prepare the way for the reconstitution of new life, a new crop, the birth of a child, and prosperity. (1985:100)

The primary vessel the Malayan are responsible for creating to accomplish the same prosperous end as the Vēḷār is a particular embodied form of spirit mediumship: the teyyam. As described in chapter one, the creative process is highly musical, with voices, drums, and double-reed instruments creating the body-medium that is also filled and emptied in the manner of ritualized earthenware.

Jitesh, a young teyyam performer from Kathirur panchayat in Kannur district, recounts how the Malayan were given the special status of *viśēṣa vādyakāra* (special musicians) in the kingdom of *Paḻaśirājā*. Although ostensibly the term is used as an honorific, viśēṣa can also mean special news and thus the term indicates another aspect of Malayan hereditary musical service. Their previous role as bearers of news in the role of bards and genealogists under the pre-colonial feudal system parallels Kothari's account of the Langa and Manganiyar musician castes of Rajasthan (2003). In this context, however, Jitesh is talking about the annual performance of rituals called *vēṭanpāṭṭukal* (literally the "songs of the hunter"). In the vēṭan ritual a Malayan dresses up as Shiva disguised as a young hunter and goes door to door to remove evil spirits and deliver blessings of prosperity at predominantly upper-caste homes. Meanwhile, another Malayan sings songs narrating the hunt accompanied by a small double-sided drum called a *tuṭi*. They receive small amounts of money, clothing, and foodstuffs in exchange for this service, which in the past would have been essential to sustain their families through the difficult rainy season in July and August.

> *Paramashiva came in the form of a vēṭan [hunter]. We perform this at temples and at the house of the kings. It [residence of kings] is called a kōvilakam. Court in the traditional language is known by the name kōvilakam. We go to those houses too during the Karkkaṭakam month to perform vēṭan, and during the Tulām month (7th) to perform. We have some rights that were given to us by them. We are given respect and also money... and we accept these. We were brought up by them. For example, in Paḻaśi kōvilakam it is the people of our community who have been given the status of special musicians [viśēṣa vādyakāranmar]. (Jitesh, June 23, 2003, Kathirur)*

Later on in the same interview he captures the irony surrounding the special access to space which his community had under feudal society in Malabar:

> *Even during the period when the high castes dominated the society, we had the duty to take care of pregnant women in palaces and also of low castes. In earlier days the people belonging to low castes could not enter temples. I hope you know about the kṣētra pravēshana villambara [temple entry act passed in 1936]. So, we had permission to enter these places even during that time. (ibid.)*

Malayan women were the midwives in northern Malabar and the men and women removed intangible afflictions caused by the evil eye or other forms of malevolent spiritual influence. As long as certain essential tasks requiring their skills were needed, the polluting presence of a Malayan was tolerated since it was accepted that there was no other community equally capable and available for protection against local malevolent forces that would come in the form of physical and mental illnesses, other misfortunes or tragic accidents.

For higher caste landowning and cultivating families, then, including the relatively low-caste numerically dominant Tiyyas, the Malayan were generally considered to have an exceptional capacity to communicate and influence supernatural beings. Many high-caste individuals I spoke with attributed this capability to the caste's relatively recent (alleged) origins in the hills of the Western Ghats (*mala* means hill in Dravidian languages), where polytheistic religious belief systems based on ancestor and local spirit worship continue to define the religious practices of Adivasi (tribal) communities today. This explanation, however, contrasts sharply with Malayan accounts that emphasize origins in the healing of the important pan-Hindu Brahminical God, Shiva. Recognizing that the primary mode of indigenous communication with these unpredictable supernatural beings was musical, high castes thereby refer to Malayan ritual occupations as a rationale for explaining their musical skills. Expressive capabilities, which are anchored in non-Brahmanical supernatural authority with a distinctive tradition of musicality. The fact that they respect and fear the efficacy of Malayan ritual uses of sound sustained by the community's collective memory are in part why non-Malayan Hindus recognize Malayan excellence in musical praxis.

In sum, the popular perception of innate Malayan musical capabilities stems from the division of labour that regulated Kerala feudal society, high caste patronage of local spiritual authority, Malayan strict observance of caste endogamy, and Malayan continuing belief in the caste's common mythical origins as musical healers. While marriage alliances within the community continue to ensure that Malayan girls and boys are raised in highly musical environments due to generations of service in local communities as traditional creative healers, it is the proud retelling of their myth of origins in the context of the modern nation-state that valorises their identity as musical specialists beyond neo-feudal productive relations. The result: even where traditional livelihoods are no longer followed, which is the case for many families that have succeeded in accessing opportunities for reserved positions for government employment and educational institutions, pride in the community's musical heritage continues to be instilled in younger generations by channelling artistic assets in the form of singing, dancing, and instrument playing in a variety of institutions established in Post-Independent India's public sphere.

However, the way that this musical heritage is transmitted, cultivated, and applied varies depending on the socio-economic position of a family. The greater the affluence of a family, the more likely they are to move away from ritual duties towards studying Karnatic and devotional music idioms, or singing and instrument playing in Indian cinema and Western musical styles. Meanwhile, poorer families continue to acquire a musical upbringing in the more traditional contexts of teyyam festivals and other ritual occasions, as will be discussed in greater detail late in the chapter. Consequently, when respected, high caste, cosmopolitan Malabar artist K. K. Marar claims, "the Malayan have music in their blood," it should be clear that this social fact cannot be explained by recourse to the Euro-centric dichotomy of socialization and genetic theories alone. It must take into account all culturally-specific practices that contribute to the maintenance and adaptation of communal musical assets, including occupational segmentation under South Indian feudal society, caste endogamy, active involvement of ancestors in the continuing fulfillment of ritual duties, and the retelling of the stories that provide the mythical foundation for reasserting the dignity and authority of musical identities in the community. Together, they give the concept of natural ability a more profound cultural significance as constitutive of, and constituting the creative means for producing and adapting sound idioms.

B. Sound Knowledge and Sensibility: Aspects of a Musician's Pedigree

Voices of Malayan Musical Expression

In contrast with the Abrahamic religions of Christianity, Judaism, and Islam, Hinduism is unique in the way that written words only exercise authority and power through an audible form. This is true for all divisions and movements identified as being Hindu by their practitioners.[27] From the highest authority presumed by Brahminical interpretations of the Vedic scriptures, to Bhakti devotional cults, to hybrid belief systems of formerly untouchable groups, words must be sounded in order to effectively convey their import. As religious studies scholar Lipner cogently puts it: "… the sacred word springs to life and exerts power when it is spoken and heard. This is why we can quite appropriately speak of the voice of scripture in the context of Hinduism" (1994:25) He supports his assertion by pointing to the fact that the Sanskrit equivalent word for scripture, *śabda*, comes from the word *śabd*, meaning to make a sound, to call. The indivisibility of meaning and sound in Hindu traditions gives the human voice an extraordinary prominence in religious and secular life in South Asia.

In Malayalam the term śabd becomes *śabdikkuka*, which can be interchangeably used to describe the act of making a sound or speaking. Extending the root in the domain of poetry, an adjectival derivative includes *śabdasoundaryam*, which evokes an aesthetically pleasing verbal beauty. These terms suggest that although Malayalis pride themselves on achieving the highest levels of literacy in India and being among the widest consumers of print culture in South Asia (Jeffrey 2000), they still prefer to hear poetry and storytelling sung. I experienced this firsthand at a folk-arts festival in a small village, south of the capital Thiruvananthapuram near the town of Neyyatinkara, in which the guest of honour was famous Kerala poet, Madthusudhanan Nair. Ironically, the theme of the gathering was a celebration of one of the most successful Kerala storytellers to master the modern genre of the novel, C. V. Raman Pillai, yet instead of featuring readings from his famous novels, the most important events of the festival were a *katakaḷi* performance and a sung recitation of Madhusudhanan Nair's poetry by the poet himself. Singing in a strophic form and style reminiscent of Kerala folk songs (*naṭanpāṭṭukal*), his embodied poetry underscored the aesthetic and functional embeddedness of words in oral performance. The prominence of orality in Kerala expressive culture also explains the paucity of work under the European category of *récits non chantés* (unsung recitations) in a recent annotated bibliography on oral literature in Kerala (Tarabout 1995:433-34). Literature, like religious scriptures and prayers, is most effectively evocative when sounded and heard, hence it is understandable why Kerala scholars have not compiled collections of oral literature that fall neatly under Euro-centric genre labels that compartmentalize sung and unsung literature.

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[27] There are many examples of important Abrahamic traditions of religious orality in South Asia in which the human voice imbues texts with sacred power, for example, Sufi expressive idioms including Qawwali and Ginan (Qureshi [1986] 1995) as well as Christian liturgical oral traditions (Palackal 2004). However, these oral-centred branches of religious expression stand in fundamental contrast with the mainstream that emphasizes the power of the word in the written form of a book, ranging from the Bible, the Torah, to the Koran. In Hinduism, even the highest scriptural authority wields sacred power orally (Howard 1999).

The prominence of orality in Indian society has important implications for understanding the pre-eminence of the voice in Kerala musical culture. The human voice is believed to have inherent special power according to Hindu philosophies of sound. Among the cornerstones of what Beck terms Hinduism's "sonic theology," is the idea that primordial sonic vibrations associated with the supernatural universe are also located in the microcosm of the human body. The potential to use sacred sound to bring about change is therefore deeply embodied. This explains why the concept of an all pervasive universal sacred sound (*Nad-Brahman*) is embedded in the tone quality of the voice, in both linguistic and non-linguistic expression (Beck 1995:81).

From northern Kashmir to the southern tip of the Indian Peninsula at Kanyakumari, vocal music maintains the highest status in all musical performance idioms in South Asia, regardless whether the setting is religious or secular. This hierarchy is often expressed in the way that musicians are arranged spatially while performing. In classical concerts or non-classical occasions, the lead singer is always positioned at the centre of the group with rhythmic and melodic accompanists seated to the right and left respectively, and a player to keep the sonorous drone in behind, thus indicating the vocalists role as both ensemble leader and bearer of superior knowledge and authority (Qureshi 2000). To a certain extent musical relationships structured by dominant and subordinate roles are a function of the relative importance given to soloist and accompanists in classical music contexts. Indeed, the point is demonstrated at performances where there are several vocalists in which they too arrange themselves as subordinate soloists around a lead singer. As Neuman thoroughly documents in his landmark *The Life of Music in North India: The Organization of a Musical Tradition* ([1980] 1990), the inferior status of accompanists compared with soloists that was established by feudal court and temple patronage prior to Independence was carried over into modern patronage arrangements at radio studios, public concerts, and music schools.

Neuman also points to a social distinction between soloists who are vocalists and those who are instrumentalists, with the former maintaining the highest position in the musical scene. Despite the relatively recent high status attributed to solo instruments like the Hindustani *sitar* and *sarod*, Muslim professional hereditary singers, called *Kalavants*, hold a special status as musicians who trace their descent patrilineally and matrineally from distinguished ancestors belonging to different stylistic traditions that span generations of Hindustani musical culture (Neuman [1980] 1990:95-96). The fact that gharanas, or stylistic lineage schools, were exclusively associated with vocal music until relatively recently suggests there is a long history of according vocalists higher status. Neuman states that "vocal music has always been considered the highest form of music, with instrumental forms subordinate to it" (ibid.:108). The dominant position of professional classical singers is even more entrenched in the south, where the Karnatic classical canon's most important founding eighteenth-century composers, Tyagaraja, Muthuswamy Dikshitar, and Syama Sastri, known reverentially as the trinity, were all singer-saints (Jackson 1991). Moreover, the successful adaptation of the violin to the Karnatic idiom hinged largely on the instrument's capacity to imitate the expressive qualities of the human voice, like the northern *sarangi*, but without carrying associations with courtesan traditions (Weidman 2006). In several interviews featured in *Master Musicians of India: Hereditary Sarangi Musicians Speak* (forthcoming), Qureshi foregrounds accounts where sarangi accompanists challenge this power structure often by deliberately taking a more prominent musical role than vocal soloists expect in performance. These rare subversive moments were remarkable events in narratives of the musicians' life stories. But at the same time, many hereditary sarangi musicians encouraged their sons and nephews to pursue careers as vocalists to escape the subordinate position of their ancestors in musical fields. While many were also encouraged to take up the tabla due to greater demand for rhythmic accompanists, singing was viewed as the highest level of achievement. This is affirmed by Pandit Ram Narayan when he describes the effect his singing had on audiences and his subsequent temptation to become a singer instead of a sarangi player.

In the popular idiom of cinema music, playback singers are accorded the same status as actors and music directors, their famous renditions of songs playing daily over the airwaves and their style imitated at popular orchestral concerts known as *gānamēḷa*. Every morning we woke up to a series of songs by legendary Kerala singers Yesudas and Cheetra playing on our neighbour's radio; the experience was a daily reminder of the importance of the human voice in Indian musical life. In recent years, music directors in the Kerala regional film industry have turned towards adding more eclectic, denser textures of instrumentation in the background of hit songs, which sparked a debate over the extent to which singers maintain audible prominence in the recordings. Older listeners prefer the earlier unchallenged focus on the voice and poetry of the lyrics while younger generations are responding well to the robust hybrid musical creations of today's music composers. The point is that the debate among listening audiences hinged on whether the voice was being undermined by inferior tools of musical expression or not. Hence, the embedded sacred status of the voice and its continuing currency as the highest form of musical capital extends into the domain of popular music, the most common realm of musical experience of the masses (Nandakumar 1999).

It is therefore understandable why Malayan tend to take greater pride in their reputation as naturally gifted singers than of their abilities as instrumentalists in or beyond the domain of hereditary musicality. Rather than display their expertise on musical instruments, they prefer to demonstrate their musical acumen and upwardly mobile status by singing a devotional, classical, or cinema song. When the subject of music was raised when visiting a Malayan home, families would regularly invite one of the younger members to sing, or they would showcase cassettes and awards associated with singing excellence. These common occurrences in the field reveal how Malayan have responded to the broader patterns of musical change and continuity that characterize the prominence of the voice in South Asia. To arrive at the point where they can perform vocal music beyond their hereditary contexts they must possess a solid foundation in vocal rudiments.

Malayan cultivate the expressive and poetic capabilities of their voices in primarily three oral repertoires associated with specific ritual services. Conceptually, they can be productively viewed as representing a continuum of vocal expressivity from highly rhythmic repetitive chanting of *mantras* used for healing rituals based on knowledge of *mantravādam*, to more shapely forms of recitation called *varaviḷi* employed in teyyam ceremonies, to the highly developed melodic and rhythmic sensibility evidenced in songs called *tōṯṯampāṭṭūkal* that describe and narrate events, qualities, and places associated with local deities. All three idioms focus on investing written and oral texts with sacred power capable of bringing about real change in peoples' lives. Though they share this common orientation, each has a distinctive set of aesthetic qualities, formal structures, and creative strategies that requires some teasing out in order to appreciate how it contributes to Malayan musicality.

Mantras are ritual speech formulas consisting of sacred syllables that are chanted to facilitate mediation between people and gods for the purpose of healing, protecting, or even inflicting injury upon individuals, families, or communities to whom the power of the mantra is directed. Though they are well documented in Sanskrit written traditions, they only acquire force when performed according to a system of oral non-verbal rules of recitation. As Beck states, "the rituals associated with the chanting of the Veda eventuated into complex choreographies of mantras that were chanted, sung, and sometimes accompanied by musical instruments" (1995:31). The vitality of sacred sound in the form of mantras stems from the deeper philosophical concept of *Nāda-Brahman*, which represents a union of sonic feminine energy with the sonic manifestation of the supreme being Brahman. Indeed, from the Hindu point of view the creation of the universe and the possibility of Nāda-Brahman occurs as a result of the agency of primordial sound vibrations that are also perceived to exist within the human body (ibid.:9). This belief implies that sonic energy is accessible within the self providing one possesses knowledge of how to harness it. As Lipner words it: "The mantra would release its power if it were appropriately unlocked, or if the right key were used" (1994:52). The

Malayan are custodians of this kind of knowledge, despite their marginalized status in Indian society, and therefore they regularly exercise (voiced) sacred sound to achieve various ends. Invoking the authority attributed to written sources, Swamidasan and his son Jitesh recount their version of the Malayan myth of origin in order to explain how they came to know about mantravādam:

> JITESH: There is a book called *Malamal Śāstram*. The things we say are based on the book. For example, Pramav Shiva was drawn to look in the mirror. After seeing his image in the mirror, it [the mirror] says descriptions should be given regarding all the communities.
>
> S.DASAN: After that, the Āśāri, Mūśāri, Taṭṭān, Kollan, and Cembuṭṭi [castes of service trades] came into being. There was a need for them to be created, so that each *karmman* [destiny] would be done. Thus the mirrors are made by Mūśāris. Mūśāris also make the *vārppŭ* [shallow flat vessel of bronze]. The people who do bronze work belong to the Mūśāri community. The people who do gold work are Taṭṭān. The people who do wood work are Āśāri. Those people who work on brass are Cembūṭṭi. A child from that community is called and asked to make a mirror. Paramashiva looks into that mirror and seeing his beauty, suddenly he gets an evil eye (*kaṇṇēṟŭ*). Because of this he feels tired and falls down. Even today the evil eye is prevalent in our place.
>
> JITESH: Evil eye.
>
> S.DASAN: Thus, he [Shiva] became afflicted by his own evil eye. He might have had the feeling that he was very beautiful, but he did not remember what he had thought. After this Parvati called MahaVishnu. He [Shiva] was lying down unconscious. They thought about what could be done. It was MahaVishnu who sent the sages (*ṛṣimār*) to the mountain. It was MahaVishnu who gave the old sages medicines, the books (*granthaṅṅal*) and the mantras necessary for the work. They performed penance in the mountains. The present day Malayans are the progeny of these people. The books that were given at that time have been copied again and again, and thus we received the present books. The things written in those books were copied by different people and they went to stay at different places. They copied the things [knowledge] from the original book (*Mūlagrantham*) that was given to them for when they needed it. This knowledge has been used through the mother's line. In such a way these books and medicines were recorded. The medicine for rat's bite I showed you yesterday is one example. (July 29, 2003, Kathirur)

As already mentioned above, the reputation of the Malayan as expert mantravādam practitioners gives them an ambivalent status that instils in others an unusual mixture of fear and reverence associated with the creative power of low caste ritual professions to absorb pollution (Inglis 1985:99). On several occasions I heard Malayan exclaim that "they," referring to the other castes, "fear us." When I asked why they would usually point to their unique connection with supernatural forces and ability to use magic to both benevolent and malevolent ends. Esoteric and highly secretive in practice, this kind of knowledge is cautiously guarded from outsiders, making it by far the most difficult subject area to access through interviews and observation.

On one occasion my ceṇṭa lesson was cut short as the men of the family were in the process of preparing for a ritual that was to be performed in the music room on the second floor of their home. A middle-aged woman in a dark green sari arrived at the front entrance. Visibly distraught, she sent a concerned glance my way (obviously not expecting to see a western visitor) before the eldest son quickly whisked her upstairs to where the ritual materials were being prepared. Was she here because of a death in the family? Were there fertility problems? Was she suffering from a malevolent affliction? Emotional or physical health issues? The only information the family shared with me was that the woman was there for a ritual that involved reciting mantras in conjunction with the mixing of natural substances in a wide pot. Whatever her reasons were, the encounter suggested that despite the exponential growth of modern institutions in Kerala over the past fifty years, there was still a demand for traditional healers. Later on I learned more about the belief system and the performative skills that give mantras their efficacy.

To get a clearer picture of how mantravādam works it is useful to compare Malayan testaments with Guy Beck's discussion of the importance of mantra in tantric rituals (1995). Although the practice of reciting mantras along with use of fire were principal ritual acts at Vedic sacrifices and thus continue to be associated with Brahminical temples, mantras are especially prominent in Goddess worship. In particular *Śākta-Tantra*, a form of worship most prevalent in the Indian states of Bengal and Kerala, involves mantras extensively in religious ceremonies to achieve various ends by awakening a form of feminine energy called *kuṇḍalini*, the source of which is located at a spiritual centre at the base of the spine (*mūlādhara*). Tantrics concentrate on reaching a mystical communion with this divine energy as a means for achieving the ultimate liberation (*mokṣa*)—a state of release from the world that is essentially a form of salvation from the cycle of rebirth and death known as *samsāram* (Kinsley [1982] 1993:85). More than other pathways leading to *mokṣa*, Tantra relies on sonic acts in pursuit of this end. Beck summarizes the centrality of sound in the tradition cogently: "From the creation of the universe to the production of sound in the human body Tantrism stresses the importance of sound as a divine substance and vehicle for salvation" (Beck 1995:123).

The power of mantras thus depends on the creative force attributed to voiced capacity to manipulate fundamental sonic life resonances in its embodied form. Mantras are typically phrases made up of single syllables that are essentially phonemes derived from letters of the alphabet, literally viewed as being anchored in the human body throughout energy centres called *cakras*. The smallest units of mantras are essentially morphemes that function as condensed verbal expressions of deities or spiritual forces (ibid.:128-29), the repetition or chanting of which is the key to releasing divine energy, an action known as *japikkuka* (to repeat, chant God's name). While performing *japa* in tantric traditions, a type of rosary made of seeds known as *akṣamāla* is typically used, each seed symbolizing a letter of the alphabet beginning with the most important letter *a*. The aim is to produce a heating effect that arouses the energy to the point where *nāda*—sacred sound—is released through the mouth and can thereafter be directed towards instrumental ends. The heating, however, must be balanced with a cooling or soothing effect in order to create what Beck characterizes as an "inner dialectical motion" that ultimately feeds a state of inertia that culminates in "a sonically unified consciousness of divine reality" (ibid.:123). Sound therefore functions both as a bridge and a vehicle for facilitating movement between material and spiritual realms. When used in conjunction with visual sacred objects, including the rosary and elaborate diagrams called *yantra* that serve as amulets, it is particularly efficacious.

In the interview excerpt below, Swamidasan explains how mantras work in conjunction with yantras. He starts by emphasizing the importance of establishing a textual visual expression of the mantras in the form of visual designs that function like an amulet to protect people from illness and evil. Later, his son Jitesh elaborates on the strict protocol that must be followed when investing the power of mantras in the amulet.

> S.DASAN: *focussing on the diagram written on a thin copper sheet called yantra:* I stop there because the mantra comes next [laughs]. So we have to write the mantra within this. Besides the mantras it is important to mention the letter *a*. That is the vowel in every yantra. The reason is that immediately after birth a child doesn't cry *ō*, the cry is *ā* [laughs]. *Ākāram* [letter "a," pronounced *ah*] is present when we speak the syllable *he*. It is there when we speak *ōm*.... but when we produce the sound *ā* ... it is the basic sound for everything in the universe. *Ōm kāram* is the mantra (*praṇavam*)... which means that new words arise when we remember that *ā* is the essential sound for all yantras that are drawn. *He recites.*
>
> KALEY: So the writing on the copper sheet indicates how mantras should be performed
>
> JITESH: Writing follows chanting.
>
> HARI: So how do you chant? Is there any particular tone and rhythm for that?
>
> JITESH: No... There is no tune... I already stated that when I discussed how certain things come under morning activities (*pradāna karmmaṅṅal*) ... connected with water, scent, and flowers.... after cleaning our body. On every day *rāhu* (inauspicious time) occurs at a certain time. For all seven days of the week there is a calculation to determine the [inauspicious] time. So this [activity of making yantras and mantras] is done when it is not rāhu. After cleaning our body, we perform these activities on the foil using a plank for placing it, usually white cedar.
>
> There are no particular ragas, tunes or rhythms for this. There is rhythmic order. It should be recited without any mistakes in the lines. Even our breath is useful in this. Now when we speak we are writing in this way... writing by holding [the instrument] in this manner. *shows how to hold*
>
> These five fingers are joined together in writing. So when we write, we write in this way. The breath will touch the foil when we recite the mantra. So this is the rule for writing on the foil. There is no particular method for writing this. The rhythms, rāgams and tunes should be pure. If there is any mistake we will be harmed. If the things such as *matsyapuccham* [Vishnu's contempt] come, like I said earlier... If the holes come and they don't fit, and

> matsyapuccham arrives then punishment will come. The punishment is not for the person who tied it but for the person who did it. Since the punishment in such cases comes from God, it will be severe. Every attempt is made to do these things in the proper way because of the fear of punishment. (July 29, 2003, Kathirur)

There are two important points that surface in this section of the interview. The first one highlights the prominence of sound in Hindu belief systems. For example, Jitesh confirms the dominant role of sound compared with other sensory media when he states that "writing follows chanting." His account makes certain that in order to hold or exercise power, visual representations of syllables or other signs must be charged with sound in order to become efficacious. Second, charging amulets with sound must be carried out according to systematic procedures and rules which, if neglected, can result in calamities for the Malayan charged with the task of preparing the amulet. Two of the parameters to be followed include only working on amulets during auspicious times and making sure that the expressive tonal and rhythmic parameters are followed carefully in the process of reciting the mantras. Noting a similar fear of punishment by the Gods in the context of performing a temple procession percussion genre called *pāni*, Groesbeck states: "It is believed that these deities will not actually come to the temple to receive these offerings unless the drummer performs *pāni* without a mistake …. Otherwise, agreed all of my informants, punishment was certain: the deity would cause the drummers death within a year" (1999a:3). Accordingly, two principles can be inferred from Jitesh's explanation: 1) voiced sound takes precedence over other sensory channels; and 2) the medium of vocal expression must be performed in a particular way at a particular time in order to be effective and avoid calamity. Together they form the foundation for all Malayan musical activities in ritual arenas, including the repertory of voiced musical idioms associated with teyyam spirit-medium ceremonies.

It is instructive to imagine a continuum of voiced musical expressivity informed by these principles, ranging from whispering of mantras privately in an esoteric fashion to song idioms performed publicly using melodic devices that resemble classical Indian music systems. Indeed, melodic complexity seems a logical first criteria for plotting Malayan voiced musicality, since Malayan ritual vocal forms exhibit a gradation from barely audible voiced tones in the chanting of mantras to larger melodic ranges in which the tune fits within the structure of a melodic type. Another stylistic parameter would be texture, with the mantra side being fairly thin and narrow and the other side displaying dense harmonic patterns projected at full volume. Equally relevant as far as texture is concerned is the criteria of instrumentation, meaning to what extent other instruments are used to accompany a vocal performance from chants that do not use any instruments, to songs that are accompanied by percussive and melodic instruments. On a related point, the rhythmic structure provides yet another stylistic feature to situate Malayan vocal performance on either side of the continuum. The rhythmic devices used in mantras is highly internalized and requires no external assistance, while on the other end a strong external rhythmic cyclical framework is frequently provided by a drum with intermittent bursts of percussion between stanzas. The musical criteria provides one way of evaluating the continuum, but in order to appreciate why its parameters shift from one end to the other it is necessary to explore how it reflects different intentions and social situations.

In addition to marking the two sides according to more or less degrees of musical intensity and complexity, the continuum foregrounds shifting relationships between the vocalist and listeners. Whereas mantras are primarily intended to be heard by the chanter and supernatural beings, varaviḷi and tōṯṯampāṭṭŭ performances aim for a wider audience that includes other ritual specialists, patrons, devotees, and extra-communal attendees. Here it is helpful to borrow Austin's speech act theory that views all communication in terms of direct explicit meaning in the form of a locutionary act, wider indirect achievements of the act as illocutionary force, and unintended consequences referred to as perlocutionary effects (Austin 1962; Duranti 1997:220). In the context of Malayan ritual domains, the intended locutionary act is always a musical gesture intended to communicate with a supernatural being, even as the illocutionary force and perlocutionary effects change from one end to the other. When a performer sings he is singing for the deity that is being called or installed in a medium, the *kōlakkāran* (person who takes on the appearance or figure of God); this is the locutionary act throughout. However, at the same time the singer is also intending to awaken the deity, as well as create a devotional atmosphere, elevate the status of the patron family, and showcase his own musicality in front of a wide audience. Moreover, the unintended perlocutionary effects might include impressing a cultural events manager, tourist, or radio director that happened to be attending that particular teyyam ceremony, or an unanticipated effect might be that the music causes someone to faint or fall into trance as a result of the intensity of a devotional moment. So the continuum provides a way of gauging degrees of musicality and social action in the ritual arenas where Malayan musical craftsmanship is developed.

The invocatory chant called varaviḷi performed in the early stages of a teyyam ceremony would sit somewhere in the middle of this continuum. The teyyam community of worship believes that all Gods and Goddesses are present in the universe and therefore an important action in the ritual is to succeed in summoning the divine power of the particular deity whose presence is sought. To accomplish this, the performer who is preparing to act as the body-medium targets a deity by calling him or her through an elaborate form of expressive chant known as varaviḷi, from the word *viḷikkuka*, the verb to invite, call, or address. Jitesh further elaborates: "The actual meaning of varaviḷi is the *āvāhikkukal* (*āvāhikkuka:* invoke the deity to enter or possess somebody or something) of the śakti, which ever deity it may be, into us. That deity is invoked to enter into our body. This is known as *viḷicca varavŭ* [call the deity to come] or varaviḷi" (June 24, 2003). The words of the stanzas (*ślōkam*) that make up a varaviḷi are specific to the deity with whom communication is sought, though there are many shared common lines emphasizing prosperity also. Paralleling pan-Hindu devotional practices aimed at merging identities of devotees with those of deities (Fuller [1992] 2004:81), the ultimate goal in the performance of teyyam—albeit on a level of much higher intensity—is the complete union of the self with the deity. Accordingly, the uniqueness of each expressive sonic form must be distinctly upheld in order to avoid any confusion as to which supernatural force is being invited.

The correct articulation of the heavily Sanskritized Malayalam oral texts is critical and Malayan consistently emphasize this aspect of performance as important criteria for evaluating the quality of a performance. Words must be clearly articulated with the correct rhythmic stress in the proper order. A leading Malayan elder, K.P.C. Panikkar highlights pronunciation and mastery of Sanskrit as a distinguishing feature that adds to the community's reputation as the most musical among teyyam performing castes

(August 19, 2003). Echoing Srinivas' concept of Sanskritization, K.P.C. claims that at one point in the region's history Malayan performers were "forced" to learn and incorporate Sanskrit poetry into teyyam performances to satisfy the aesthetic demands of high-caste patrons. Unlike other teyyam communities, the Malayan perform only Godly teyyams in contrast with ancestral teyyams who became deities after extraordinary mortal lives. This could be one reason why it was important to integrate Sanskrit into their vocal idioms, in order to accommodate powerful pan-Hindu deities into the teyyam pantheon. Another way of interpreting the greater presence of Sanskrit is through the lens of Sanskritization, which would suggest that at one point in history Malayan sparked a collective movement to raise their social status by appropriating the linguistic forms of higher castes. As it gathered momentum, the movement likely resulted in the particular lapidary crafting of language that defines the oral tradition of Malayan verbal ritual arts today. Indeed the integration of Sanskrit with the Dravidian vernacular is the reason why Malayalam constitutes a distinct language from its earlier roots as a dialect of Tamil. However, there is still a noticeable gulf between the highly Sanskritized higher caste Malayalam and the more vernacular dialects of the masses, which reflects earlier strict control over access to high-caste social spaces, including courts, landowning estates, and temples (Freeman 1998). The fact that the Malayan gained access to this prestigious linguistic capital at least several decades prior to the curbing of high-caste violence and domination, indicates the extent to which their professional services enabled modes and spaces of interaction with high castes that were not available to other service communities considered to be extremely polluting. The ability to create poetic musical settings of Sanskrit provides yet another clue to the puzzle of assets from which Malayan draw upon to improve their social status.

If the use of Sanskrit in mantras is highly secretive, even barely audible at times, the linguistic expression employed in the varaviḷi is unmistakably public. The recitation is directed at the universe first, but in the process it also engages the entire listening community of worship gathered for the ritual occasion. Thus the goal is to project and articulate with a full voice capable of carrying above all the dissonance animating the festival soundscape. Standing in front of the stone or raised platform where the deity is believed to reside and facing the directional orientation of the particular deity being summoned, the performer intones a high note on which to recite the verses of the varaviḷi. Typically, a series of verses end with a sweeping motion of the voice downward (approximately an octave in range) which is often accompanied by one or more rounds of energetic rhythmic patterns played on one or more ceṇṭas. In some cases there will only be one lower-pitched drum placed on the pīṭham [sacred seat, a wooden stool], which the performer then plays in between verses. While the performer recites he holds one drum stick between clasped hands in a gesture of prayer. The primary role of the ceṇṭa at this point is to bolster the śakti of the deity as it accumulates in the body. Moreover, it also serves to structure the varaviḷi in a way that draws attention to the separation of each stanza for listening audiences, making it more accessible in terms of form while also giving a break to the challenging breathing and full quality of voice required for the performance. Compared with the tōṟṟam repertory of songs, the varaviḷi are not easily distinguished musically, though I was told the timbre and intonation does mater depending on the character of the deity invoked. However, it seems more fitting to address the most important dimension of vocal performance, *bhāva*, or expression, in a discussion of tōṟṟampāṭṭukal, representing the other end of the continuum of voiced ritual performance.

The sonic dimensions of the repertory of ritual songs called tōṟṟampāṭṭukal are largely unexplored in most academic literature on teyyam. Despite the vital role sound plays in facilitating spirit mediumship, most scholars treat the repertory of ritual songs as merely textual sources for interpreting the belief system surrounding local deities and the socio-historical context (Kurup [1973] 2000, 1977; Freeman 1991; Vishnu Namboodiri 1998). Preoccupied with the complex flow of visual ritual action and the meaning of the content relayed by the sung narratives in the moments leading up to the onset of possession, most researchers fail to recognize the constitutive force of the songs. In his thorough dissertation on teyyam, Freeman acknowledges that the songs are used to bring the performer closer to the identity of the deity in question, but he stops short of giving music agency that depends not only on the words of the story but on the total sound performance, including both linguistic and non-linguistic stylistic features (Freeman 1991). Pallath, by contrast, does hint at the powerful force of the soundscape created in the process of performing tōṟṟam when he states: "The rising crescendo of *thottam*—

chanting, the sound of jingling anklets, the rhythmic deafening musical accompaniment … makes the entire crowd erupt in frenzy of rhythmic fervour, the whole spectacle of sound, movements, and colour leaves a lasting effect on the participants" (1995:91). Though richly descriptive in detail, the picture he presents does not get under the surface to find out how these effects are elicited and what they intend to accomplish in the ritual arena. Contrasting with Pallath's account is Kurup's rather prosaic literary view on the textual significance of the body of songs in which he acknowledges that teyyam is "supported by a vast literature of folk songs," and that "except for a few cases, we have no information about their authors," but still "the songs have a place in the evolution of the Malayalam language and literature" ([1973] 2000:63). Missing from all three accounts are interpretations that draw upon explanations and terminology used by the performing communities. In particular, Malayan perspectives would have added considerable depth to what are otherwise remarkable scholarly achievements for their historical and anthropological scope.

In contrast with textual perspectives that focus on song as primarily a medium for telling a story or accompanying ritual action, Malayan stress the agency attributed to the act of singing. According to performers, the purpose of tōṯṯam—its locutionary act—is to awaken the energetic presence of the deity invoked (its śakti) by performing its song using the appropriate expressions, or bhāva, for that deity. Jitesh states:

> *After the man has come and performed the five rites and after he has attracted the force in the universe into his body, that force must be woken up by others [the other people singing and playing music]. That force is dissolved into the inner soul (ulkambilēkke). In order for that to happen ... energy is required. You should give wakefulness to that [the energy]. You have to give it energy (urjam) and bring it out. After changes happen to this person, that person should become the deity. Then, that phenomenon of transformation is thottam. (July 10, 2003, Kathirur)*

Jitesh explains in this interview that the word tōṯṯam is closely linked to the expression *tōṯṯi camayikkuka*, meaning to prepare someone to become the teyyam. Complimenting this definition by adding a mental dimension to the external semantic focus of camayikkuka, the verb *tōṯṯuka* means to cause or to form in the mind as well as to revive. It is creative force in the process of merging the identity of the body-medium with the theyyam. Accordingly, in Malayan terms, to chant and awaken—*colli* *uṇarttuka*—describes precisely what tōṯṯam aims to accomplish. To borrow D'Andrade's framework for analyzing affective meaning systems, the songs that are chanted by the Malayan have constitutive, regulative, directive, and above all, evocative force (1984). When applying this scheme it is important to recognize that in the context of Malayan teyyam ceremonies, without the evocative force, the other forces are simply not possible. Arousing, regulating, and directing the śakti that energizes the spirit-medium involves creating the right mood that corresponds to the character of the deity present. For this, there are musical parameters which Malayan follow as part of their hereditary musicality to ensure the correct bhāva is expressed. Thus although the term tōṯṯam is commonly used to refer to a type of ritual song idiom performed in the process of bringing about the transmigration of a spirit into a human body, for the Malayan it is much more: the songs themselves constitute the evocative agency responsible for awakening the spiritual energy of the universe inside the body.

One of the key musical strategies employed to create the appropriate bhāva for a given deity is the use of specific melodic types to provide suitable affective settings for the text. In classical Indian musical traditions, the pan-Indian term *rāgam*[28] refers to a melodic system in which pitches (*svāras*) and intervals are organized into distinct types, each of which presents a scalar conceptual framework or outline for developing tonal possibilities that evoke specific moods through performance at prescribed times of the day. It is misleading to compare this concept to Western scales or modes, although in some respects ragas do resemble scales, for example, their character is partly distinguished by the specific forms of ascending and descending motion. The similarities end there, however, as ragas imply a larger performance-centred compositional process that relies on a stockpile of characteristic melodic fragments as well as preferred pitch or intervallic emphases to invoke a particular mood and range of extra-musical associations (Sambamoorthy 1971; Powers 1980; Bor 1999). Rather than focusing on composition as an end in itself requiring elaborate notational systems, Indian music philosophy has concentrated more on theories of performance that include improvisational and compositional strategies in which the concept of raga figures prominently. Consequently,

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[28] Although in Dravidian languages the "m" is usually added to the end of the singular word "rāga," in Indian music scholarship written in English the North Indian version without the "m" is more commonly used. As a result, I use the two interchangeably, depending on the context.

"action and cognition rank higher than the production of sound artifacts" (Rowell 1992:124).

It is precisely the prominence given to practice (*prayoga*) in theoretical music discourse that establishes conditions for a more fluid exchange of concepts between classical and non-classical musical expression in India. Contrary to opinions drawing rigid barriers between concepts of melody used in "pure music" and the melodic types employed in non-classical music idioms, there has always been considerable fluidity across genres of musical expression, including those separated by significant caste and class divisions. Wade, among other scholars, has recognized that many classical ragas are derived from tunes stemming from vernacular styles of folk song (1979:74; Allen 1998). Moving in the opposite direction, the Malayan regularly appropriate the classical concept of raga to describe the melodic process and framework that characterizes their tōṯṯam singing and performance on the *kurum kuḻal*.

The Malayan use the term "raga" to describe their melodic sensibility in a way that foregrounds another important meaning of the word as a concept for colour and character. Similarly, Palackal's research on the Syrian Orthodox chant liturgies of central Kerala demonstrates how a melodic concept of *niṟam* borrows considerably from Indian classical music and aesthetic theory (2004). Niṟam literally means "colour" in Malayalam, but in addition to its perceptual sensoric meaning, the term can also be used to describe the mood required for a text at a given point in the cycle of the liturgy. He argues persuasively that Syrian Christian leaders evolved a sophisticated theory of the relationship between bhāva (expression), melody and text, which reflects a syncretic integration of liturgical text and performative dimensions of an indigenous melodic system,[29] much like the process of musical indigenization led by liberation theologians among Dalits in Tamil Nadu described by Sherinian (1998). Palackal's discussion of niṟam also highlights another meaning of the term, namely its generic use as a word for "character." Rooted in Kerala's rich tradition of dramatic arts, ironically, this usage would appear to be more relevant in the performance-centred context of teyyam than for text-centred liturgical contexts. In Syrian Orthodox Christian worship, the correct melodic framework, the appropriate niṟam, should be applied to bring out the particular mood (bhāva) conveyed in the text of a prayer or recitation. According to Palackal, the process for creating bhāva is open-ended in its potential for simultaneous composition-improvisation within the structure of the niṟam (245). Likewise, an important goal in tōṯṯam is to evoke the mood of the text with the added objective of presenting the proper character of the deity. But the scope for improvisation-composition is pursued through other musical parameters, since tōṯṯam songs are essentially strophic in form and, accordingly, the basic outline of the tune is fixed, the date and individual authorship of its composition being irrelevant in the context of its use and communal transmission. However, unlike the Syrian orthodox musical system, the purpose of tōṯṯam is to bring about a powerful transmigration of a deity into a human body-medium, which explains why the emphasis on character is so important.

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[29] Palackal also acknowledges that this process would have certainly been aided by the knowledge early Syrian Church leaders must have had of the classical Arabic *maqam* melodic system.

Malayan tōṯṯam singers focus on creating the character of the God by building the intensity of a performance gradually over a period of time that typically lasts anywhere from ten minutes to an hour, depending on the stage of the ritual. They accomplish this by applying a variety of vocal and instrumental musical strategies to the strophic cyclical melodic and rhythmic structure. To begin with, repetition of a song's strophic form is key to creating a hymn-like soundscape that communicates with and envelops the larger community of worship while pursuing its main objective to awaken the energy of the deity, who has already been called into the body through the varaviḷi. Far from being dull and mechanical in performance, Malayan use of repetition as a musical strategy is highly varied through other stylistic features. For example, the textual unfolding of the narrative provides one way of generating sustained interest and evocative force, particularly through variation in its setting through flexible use of mainly four features of musical poetics: voice quality, articulation, texture, and instrumentation. Instead of exploring different melodic possibilities for setting ritual texts, as in the case of the niṟam in Christian liturgies discussed above, the function of teyyam ceremonies requires other parameters to generate affect and drama, to which I now turn.

Two important contributions to music scholarship stand out for the way they sparked new or renewed interest in the social meaning and use of the qualities of sound in musical performance. First, Alan Lomax's comparative cantometrics model for measuring a wide range of vocal parameters from around the world was important for having provided the first method for describing the elusive feature of timbre in vocal poetics (1976). This opened up the possibility for thinking about the semiotic and evocative dimensions of music differently and established a standpoint for critiquing a Euro-centric bias towards music that did not conform to Western stylistic priorities and aesthetics. Vocal practices that were formerly described as primitive and unsophisticated could now be valorised on their terms. Around the same time, a translation of Barthes' well-known article, "The Grain of the Voice" (1977), took the debate outside ethnomusicological discourse to engage musicologists and popular music and cultural studies theorists. Even despite these influential moments in music scholarship, there remains a prevalent bias towards evaluating music on the basis of criteria rooted in analysis of Western art music and consequently, timbre is often not taken seriously despite its critical status as an agent of meaning and emotion in many musical systems.

The quality of voice that Malayan develop for singing tōṯṯam is a distinctive component in their vocal musicality. This is confirmed by a Malabar classical music teacher I interviewed:

> Singing in the tōṯṯam system, that should come by heart. This is rare in the new generation where a number of performers don't sing. Those who learn by studying pure music [Karnatic classical], sing. But, since that is in a particular nature, that should be sung in its own way. Tōṯṯam is a part of a system, a system from ancient times. So that means there is a kind of *brga* [tremolo] coming from their throat that does not suit pure music. (Balan Master, March 6, 2004, Thalassery).

Most importantly, the quality of voice employed in a given tōṯṯam song depends on the character of the tōṯṯam. For example, if the deity is the dreaded Kuṯṯiccāttan, the performers voice must convey a seriousness that is distinct from the character of other deities. Interestingly, to describe the attention paid to changes in tonality the Malayan use the term raga. Though they do sometimes invoke the names of north or south Indian classical ragas as a way pointing to similarities between the two systems, it seems more common in speech to qualify ragas by attaching the name of the deity to the melodic type used in his or her tōṯṯam. A similar practice of attaching the names of deities to particular tunes is identified by Richard Wolf among the Kota Adivasi community in the Nilgiri hills nearby, but they apparently do not describe their system in classical terms (2006).

Whether Malayan use of the term raga predates the community's wider access to Karnatic music training or represents a relatively recent way of expressing upwardly mobile status and willingness to Sanskritize their hereditary musical knowledge, its contemporary place in the vocabulary points to a meaning in the community that is more closely related to how the concept of colour, or niṟam, evokes the bhava and character associated with a given deity.

A feature of Malayan style of singing tōṯṯam that is closely related to timbre is the importance given to ornamentation or *gamaka*, as it is known in Indian classical music treatises and hereditary tradition. In particular, the Malayan I worked with and local non-Malayan music specialists singled out a distinctive approach to elaborating texts using tremolo, *bṛga* in Malayalam, as part of their strategy for beautifying a tōṯṯam raga within the framework of the deity's character and the strophic form of the song. K.P.C Panikkar provided the best explanation of this aesthetic principle:

> *I usually try to increase the beauty of the tōṯṯams by singing them beautifully in a way that it doesn't effect its originality. That is a special effect caused by the raga, a special effect created by the voice [or sound] and the throat. Music is such a thing... [he demonstrates by singing] This is a style of singing. It can be beautified [sings again to demonstrate how the tōṯṯam can be beautified without bringing changes in its original form]*
>
> *Do you understand? It is for your understanding that I am saying this. [sings again] ... It is sung thus. When it is sung like this [sings again]... it is about Krishnamoorthy... [sings again...] It should be sung in this way. Did you notice the difference between the two? An existing raga is beautified through singing without bringing any essential change to the raga. Without changing the original form it is beautified to a great extent. This beautification is my contribution. (August 19, 2003, Kunnaru)*

One of the most effective means for increasing the intensity of the song's affect in the process of arousing the śakti in the human body is through a thickening of the harmonic vocal texture. Harmony here does not imply the major-minor range of combinatory options within a larger harmonic structure organized according to a linear order of progression. Rather it is expressive use of harmonic tension to enhance the text and texture of melodic outline that remains the central organizing principle of the performance. In the first phase of the tōṯṯam it is common for one person to sing alone, a task usually taken up by one of the stronger musical leaders in the group. As the song progresses, which can either occur in the same strophic pattern or by way of another phase depending on the teyyam, more voices join in. As the performance unfolds a flexible approach to singing tunes in unison while at the same time exploring dissonant and consonant harmonic deviations is discernable, resulting in fuller textures with ample tension that directs special focus on the quality of vocal expression among participants. Sometimes there is a call and response alternation between a soloist or two singers and the rest of the group, while at other occasions every one sings throughout. In most cases, due to the long time period over which the song unfolds, a core leader or group of two people perform consistently throughout while others join and drop out depending on their knowledge or energy; or, if they are attending to another detail of the ritual at the same time they may choose to focus on that instead. Until relatively recently, women also participated in this part of the ritual, adding their voices to the vocal fabric created around the teyyam performer. In some places, women from the older generation of Malayan families continue to sing with the men during the ceremony, adding a higher pitch to the texture and thereby increasing the harmonic range considerably.

The fourth characteristic of Malayan tōṯṯam singing is the use of accompanying rhythmic and occasionally melodic instruments. The rhythmic cycle of the tōṯṯam, the tāḷam, is kept throughout the singing by at least one drum that beats the basic structure with one stick, stressing the first beat and other main pulses. Later as the group gets closer to the goal of awakening the deity, other drums played with two sticks using a rolling technique join in to intensify the arousal of the deity. As the soundscape thickens, voices reach their fullest texture and the song culminates with the onset of possession. The effect suggests that the added instrumentation provides the final boost of agency needed to install the deity in the body-medium. Other percussion instruments used during tōṯṯam singing include small cymbals of different sizes that serve to accentuate the same structure played on the first drum. Finally, in addition to the idiophones and membranophones accompanying the voices, the kurum kuḷal may be used to support the voices by imitating their melodic lines in the same way a violinist or sarangi player does in classical idioms. A decline in knowledge and competence in playing the double-reed instrument among younger generations makes this rare, but when encountered it clearly bolsters the entire evocative force of the topic.

Concluding the outline of tōṯṯam singing with the role of instrumentation provides a fitting transition to lead into a discussion of the wider uses of instruments in teyyam rituals. But first, to sum up this overview of the fundamental status of the voice in the Malayan continuum of vocal musicality it seems reasonable to conclude like Palackal, that there is evidence of a sophisticated system of explicit theory as opposed to implicit theory associated with folk music (2004:247). But unlike the Syrian Christian case study, which centres on an economically dominant community of high-caste background (prior to their conversion), the past stigma of untouchablity associated with the Malayan positions the latter at a much greater disadvantage as far as gaining wider recognition for their hereditary musicality. Yet clearly they draw from a similar tradition of give and take with the classical traditions, a fact that sheds some light on how Malayan were able to master other classical and non-classical musical idioms. The picture becomes even clearer when we consider their hereditary experience with playing instruments.

Sonic Tools and Capabilities of a Ritual Trade

> *During the time of the kings the ceṇṭa was a weapon for announcing. During the time of the kings, by playing the perumbara [large kettle drum] things were communicated to the people. People were informed. Like that, it is proclaimed by Raja Ravi Varma, and the ceṇṭa is played. It was there in the past to announce the proclamation. (Swamidasan, July 17, 2003, Kathirur)*

Drums are by far the most common musical instruments featured at performances in Kerala. Few regions of India can compare to the diversity and propensity with which percussion instruments dominate the soundscape of the state's public sphere, most commonly at temples and increasingly at cultural arts festivals staged at private and public urban locations. Descriptions of the Cera Dynasty recorded in Tamil Sangam poetry composed in the first few hundred years of the Common Era verify that there is a long history of prominence given to drums in political and religious contexts in the territory now called Kerala. In a reverential passage echoing Swamidasan's opening account of the political and martial use of drums, one poet wrote:

> The enemies of the Ceras had not a wink of sleep on account of the fearful thrumming on the kettle-drums in the Cera army. The Cera warriors beat their drums and offer to their gods cooked-tiNai (Setaria italicum) mixed with the blood of animals. The Cera-might is invincible; the enemy drums are silenced by the victorious beat of the Cera drums, which sound like the rolling thunder. (Balasubramanian 1980:50)

References to drumming in the context of warfare as a symbol of royal sovereignty and authority extend to the whole of South India. Percussion use in South Indian kingdoms parallels the status accorded to drums as dominant instruments in the socio-musical history of African kingdoms. As equal bearers of great traditions according high status to drums as powerful instruments of communication, West African and Kerala societies are among the few places in the world to develop hourglass-shaped drums (*iṭakka* in Kerala) with adjustable tension in order to facilitate melodic as well as rhythmic expression (Chernoff 1979:95). While drums are perhaps more identified with African societies, the use of powerful percussion in psychological and physical acts of violence as an assertion of territoriality has been well documented around the world, from marching drum bands in Northern Ireland (Jarman 1997:103, 189) to sonic warfare itself, prompting Schafer to rhetorically remark that "if cannons had been silent they would never have been used in warfare" (1980:77). The above Sangam poet's description of the use of drums in religious and military arenas in the same stanza also confirms Appadurai's thesis that politics and religion have always been intricately entangled in South India societies (1981). Whether as a marker of kingly status and territorial dominion, an instrument of intimidation on the battlefield, or a means of facilitating communication with the divine—musicians skilled at playing percussion have exercised tremendous communicative and evocative agency in the southern kingdoms of the Indian Subcontinent.

The difference between South and North Indian classificatory systems for musical instruments adds more weight to the claim that drums play a more significant role in South India. Groesbeck points out how classification according to Sangam Tamil sources distinguishes between outside (*puram*) and inside (*akam*) instruments in contrast with the fourfold scheme outlined in the North Indian Sanskrit treatise on performance, the Nātya Śāstra, which aligns more closely with the European Hornbostel and Sach system of classifying instruments according to how sound is produced (1995:161). Taking a more functional and contextual approach to classifying musical instruments, the southern binary scheme allows for the grouping of aerophones, idiophones, and membranophones together due to the shared capacity of certain instruments to project sound in open spaces outside of closed structures. This combination of percussion and wind instruments evolved into the more recent temple and procession ensemble common throughout the southern states called *periya mēḷam*, which consists of several *tāvil*, barrel-shaped drums played with a stick, and long double-reed instruments called *nāgasvaram* (Terada 1992). Writing at the height of the colonial period with a strong evaluative bias in favour of smaller ensembles more accessible to Western ears, Day comments on the amplitude of these ensembles:

> The effect of a méla can hardly be called pleasing, unless to those whose chief delight is discordant noise. The air, such as it is, is generally drowned by the clanging of cymbals and the incessant drumming, which added to the prolonged and shrill drone of the s'rutis, produce and effect considerably imposing. But, as Captain Willard pithily enough remarks it is heard to advantage "from a distance." (Day [1891] 2003: 95)

The classification of southern instruments according to interior and exterior functions in the Sangam literature with continuing evidence of a conceptual division in practice, combined with the consequent importance given to percussion and resounding wind instruments, gives weight to Groesbeck's argument that the roots of musical culture in South India are more Dravidian than Sanskritic in origin (1995:155).

This is particularly evident in Kerala where all indigenous classical and non-classical performing idioms are characterized by an abundance of diverse percussion instruments designed for outdoors, each requiring many years of specialized musical training to master (Groesbeck and Palackal 2000). The *pañcavādyam* (literally "five instruments") ensemble provides one of the best illustrations of the full range of Kerala outdoor musical sonorities and expertise. Performed in the context of temple festivities and increasingly at tourist art festivals, the ensemble consists of several barrel drums (*maddaḷam*), smaller hourglass hand drums (*timila*), larger hourglass hand drums for which the tension can be manipulated to produce different pitches (iṭakka), small cymbals (*ilattāḷam*), and a long curved horn (*kombŭ*). A conch shell (*śaṅkhŭ*) typically awakens the deity and announces the start of the performance, which unfolds with players alternating between patterns in unison and solo improvisation while the kombŭ provides structural cues and sustained tonal contrast. Besides the narrative verses (*ślōka*) sung by two singers, the main musical instruments animating the stories told through the classical dance-drama and icon of Kerala high culture, *katakaḷi*, include the maddaḷam and the ceṇṭa as well as the ilattāḷam cymbals. Finally, the ceṇṭa mēḷam, comprised of many ceṇṭa, kombŭ (semicircular horns), ilattāḷam, and kurum kuḻal present another example of an exterior temple ensemble, particularly common in the central districts of Kerala. It is this ensemble that is most relevant to the discussion of Malayan musicality as these are the main instruments employed for teyyam ceremonies.

The most common percussion instrument associated with the Malayan is the ceṇṭa, a cylindrical double-headed drum made of a hollowed out piece of wood from the Jackfruit tree. Popularly known throughout northern Malabar as *koṭṭukkāran*, meaning drum beaters from *koṭṭŭ* (beat) and *kāran* (person; also friend), Malayan are skilled at using two types of ceṇṭa. Though there are variations in the names for these two drums, they are widely referred to as the *vīkkŭ* (from another term, *vīkkuka*, for the verb "to beat"; also *vīkkŭ ceṇṭa*) and ceṇṭa. In the same way that a version of the pan-Indian concept of rāgam is found in speech about music and music practice in the Malayan community, ceṇṭa players use the word tāḷam to describe the rhythmic system they follow and indeed demonstrate in the context of teyyam performance. They provide another example of what Groesbeck has aptly termed "bidirectional influences" between Karnatic music and other Kerala idioms (1999b:101).

Questioning the classical/folk classificatory scheme that has shaped government art policies and scholarly discourse, Groesbeck expands Babiracki's original critique (1991) by arguing that the great/little dichotomy fails to acknowledge the extent to which all musical traditions evolved ideas and concepts through interaction with each other (1999b). In short, scholarship has missed or ignored the unmistakable hybridity confronted in practice. Highlighting the case of mutual influence between the high-caste Mārār and the ex-untouchable Puḷḷavan caste in their respective genres of *tāyampaka* (ceṇṭa ensemble idiom) and *pāmpin tuḷḷal*, Groesbeck rejects essentialist frameworks that reify genres as mutually exclusive or at best, unidirectional in their path of influence (ibid.:100). Similarly, Malayan have evolved their musicality in response to a variety of modes of musical expression associated with other high and low castes, including rhythmic systems derived from the Mārār ceṇṭa genre of tāyampaka and Karnatic music. Curiously, Groesbeck's thesis does not address the links between the Malayan and the Mārār castes in Northern Malabar despite significant histories of interaction between the two ritual musician communities. The absence points to the limited geographical area in which he worked (central Kerala) and the problem with relying on unsubstantiated secondary sources for particular musician caste identities. Furthermore, as the portraits in chapter five of this thesis demonstrate, it is not enough to simply rewrite the paths of influence between genres. Rather in order to grasp the complexity of musical production and tradition on the ground, socially-committed music scholarship must recognize how musicians move across genres. Though they may not be able to move into hereditary positions of ritual service, musicians will take advantage of whatever openings present themselves outside of their own inherited contexts. It is largely the cultivation of experience with stylistic features that fit within a pan-Indian musical frame of reference that enables this socio-musical mobility.

The way Malayan use tāḷam in their teyyam idiom of ceṇṭa performance does reflect many aspects of conventional practice and understanding of a classical rhythmic system consisting of "a metrical framework, or structure of beats, within which pieces of music are composed and performed" (Nelson 2000:138). Mirroring Karnatic conventions, the most common meter among many in their repertoire is a version of the eight-beat *aṭi tāḷam*. The difference between how rhythm unfolds in teyyam compared with other contexts is largely an issue of direction: that is, how the composition-improvisation process is directed. In contrast with tāyampaka, where the rhythmic flow and structure depends on individual leaders that determine when it is appropriate to insert a cadence (*kalaṣam*), teyyam ceṇṭa playing theoretically takes all of its cues from the deity embodied in the kōlakkāran. In practice, these cues are interpreted situationally in two different stages of the ritual. First, during the process of awakening of the deity's energy and presence through tōṟṟam singing, the vīkkŭ plays the tāḷam to which the song is sung, usually an eight beat cycle. Then, when the energy of the deity grows more intense the ceṇṭas join in to boost the evocative agency of the music so that the deity will fully inhabit the kōlakkāran. This moment is visibly expressed by a violent trembling of the body (*uṟayuka*) while still seated. What follows is a sequence of dance steps that require different tāḷams, the changes between which are prompted by a transitional pattern called *koṭṭikalāśam* (beat cadence). The ensemble is cued by a more experienced player, typically the musicians who beats the tāḷam framework on the vīkkŭ (fig. 13).

Also referred to as *iṭamtala* (left head), the vīkkŭ is larger in diameter, shorter in height, and primarily used for keeping the rhythmic cycle (tāḷam) by beating the main pulses with a single stick while the instrument is held horizontally to the ground with a strap fastened at both ends and draped over the performer's shoulder. Alternatively, the ceṇṭa, or *vaṭamtala* (right head) as it was called during my lessons, has a smaller diameter with a longer body. Played with two sticks while held in a frontal upright position with the top head facing slightly away from the musician, its purpose is to use a combination of dynamic rolling and beating techniques to animate, embellish, and energize the rhythmic cycle in the process of boosting and pleasing the spirit called into the kōlakkāran. In contrast with the tāḷam focus of the vīkkŭ, the ceṇṭa is freer to explore creative rhythmic strategies in the process of responding to the needs of the teyyam. Together the two membranophones represent a larger division within Kerala percussion traditions separating tāḷam keepers and "performers of rhythmic compositions" (Groesbeck 1995:336). Although there is considerable scope for improvisation and composition within the tāḷam, musical gestures (including those of the ceṇṭa) follow from the actions of the teyyam, especially during the phase of the ritual where the deity dances around the kāvŭ compound progressing through a sequence of dance steps which must be accompanied with the appropriate cyclical pattern (fig. 14).

Materials used in the making of the drums include leather hides from either goats or cows for the heads, flexible bamboo strips that fastened in a ring around the diameter of the head, and rope to secure the skin to the wooden cylinder. The sticks are carved to a length of 30 cm (1 ft) from tamarind tree branches, and are finely tapered using pieces of broken glass or knives till the ends curve upwards at a 120 degree angle (fig. 15). While I did not have the opportunity to see a drum being made, I was told that some Malayan know how to make them from scratch. This contrasts with Groesbeck's observations in his research on professional temple ceṇṭa players in central Kerala where drums used by high-caste Mārār musicians serving Brahminical temples are not made by the community, possibly indicating their greater concern with ritual purity, since leather is a highly polluting substance.

In addition to two kinds of ceṇṭa, Malayan also use the small pair of bell-metal cymbals mentioned above called ilattāḷam. Approximately 20 cm (8 inches) in diameter each, the pieces have short protruding handles for the hand to grasp at the end of which a rope or nylon chord is attached to join them together. The cymbals are struck at an angle with one moving downwards and another moving upwards in the same motion to create a combination of metallic resonance and stops to articulate the main pulses of the tāḷam. Essentially, the ilattāḷam follows the pattern played on the vīkkŭ and thus reinforces the rhythmic framework within which all other musical activity unfolds.

Completing the ensemble, the double-reed instrument known throughout South India as the *kurum kuḻal* (literally "small pipe") is the only aerophone associated with teyyam rituals. Much shorter than its larger cousin, the nāgasvaram, its wooden body is about forty-five cm (17 ins.) in length, including the horn, which is typically made of bell metal. It also uses smaller reeds, which according to some of the players I interviewed makes it a much more difficult instrument to play. Compared with other instruments used in teyyam, the kurum kuḻal requires more extensive training with a guru away from the kāvŭ ritual site, since there is usually only one performer at a time playing during the ritual and thus it is essential that it be done properly. Whereas the use of rāgam in tōṯṯam singing is limited to a particular melodic type based on the character of the deity, the kurum kuḻal player is freer to improvise within the framework of rāgams used in the songs or those that mirror the particular mood of the deity at a given point in the ritual. In the case of *Poṭṭan* teyyam, M. T. Manoharan confirms that the kuḻal plays a version of *todi* rāgam to capture the seriousness of the teyyam's allegorical narrative, critical of untouchability and upper-caste discrimination in general. But for the Goddess *Mucilōṭṭŭ Bhagavati*, mediated by the Vaṇṇān community, the rāgam *mohanam* is frequently used to evoke tranquillity. "Depending on the teyyam's form (*rūpam*) and mood (*bhāva*), the correct rāgam is used" (Manoharan, April 7, 2004, Mattul). There is also an association with ritual temperature whereby the heat of deities, especially angry Goddesses, must be cooled through various offerings in order to ensure the well-being of the community of worship (Fuller [1992] 2004:44-45). Included among these cooling agents is the sound of appropriate rāgams played skilfully on the kurum kuḻal, thereby offering a counterpoint to the heating effects of the drums required to boost the power (śakti) of the deity in the teyyam medium. Furthermore, Eranholy Bharatan also explained that the rāgams played by the kurum kuḻal are also linked with times of the day, for example, during the Poṭṭan teyyam, in addition to the aforementioned todi as the central characterizing rāgam, *gāndharva* rāga is played in the morning and *māyamāḷavagowḷa* in the evening (Sept., 2003, Eranholy).

Echoing the principal goal of dissolving the identity of a kōlakkāran into the identity of a deity through tōṯṯam singing, the music of the kuḻal, according to Swaminatan, should become one with the deity:

> *In the case of kurum kuḻal, a special guru is required. It is music (sangītam). It is a kind of merging (layanam). There are many ragas, like mohanam, bhairavi, and others. When the deities are dancing there is a kind of merging. ... In the flute of Sri Krishna Bhagavan there is also a kind of merging. And it is for bringing about this merging that kurum kuḻal is required. The new ceṇṭa players are not capable of beating the patterns connected with the kalaśam of the deities. The beating of the ceṇṭa must be directed. The kurum kuḻal is the instrument that leads the way. When there is a mistake in the tāḷam of the ceṇṭa, the kurum kuḻal brings the tāḷam back to the correct way. Then, the ceṇṭakāran should realize and attend to his mistake. The person who is playing ceṇṭa should be attentive. If the player is not attentive the performance will become poor. The main function of the kurum kuḻal is to create this merging of music. The important function of the kuḻal is the merging of the deities. (July 6, 2003, Koorara)*

The merging that Swaminatan stresses in his account of the position of the kurum kuḻal in the ritual ensemble clearly a double meaning: it refers to the unity that should be achieved between the identity of the deity and the phrases of the rāgam, as well as the unity of the ensemble required to create a successful performance. Along with the lead ceṇṭa player who directs changes in tāḷam and ritual stages according to the behaviour of the teyyam, the kuḻal player also takes on a leadership role, correcting mistakes of others in the troupe and announcing important changes in the ritual structure unfolding. The directional force and prominence of the instrument is underscored by its role in bringing the event to a close. According to Jitesh, everything concludes when the kurum kuḻal plays alone at the end of the ritual after the deity has left the body of the kōlakkāran. For a short period of time, only the kuḻal playing rāgam *madhyamavadhi* can be heard in a gesture of dedication (*samarppaṇam*) to all the deities present. More than that, though, it is an essential step for sending the deity back into the universe and to the specific site it inhabits in the kāvū, a process called *kaḻakkamūti aṭaykkuka* (to perform the service of "covering the lid") ensuring that the deity is restored to its rightful place. When the drums join in and the ensemble finishes together, the festival of that year ends (July 10, 2003, Kathirur). Thus the kuḻal also exercises tremendous constitutive and directive power due to its evocative force in the hands of skilled players. The following exchange with respected elder Eranholy Bharatan illuminates the risks involved if kurum kuḻal is not included in the ensemble:

> KALEY: So what is the consequence of not using the kurum kuḻal?
>
> BHARATAN: It is not good for the temple. The temple has no growth if devotion to the images of God through performance are carried out without the music [of the kurum kuḻal]. The decaying continues. (Eranholy, Sept.16, 2003)

More than any other musical act in the teyyam ritual process, the kurum kuḻal is intended to please the god in much the same way South Indian kings were entertained (fig. 16). To do this, gifted Malayan performers master a difficult instrument with a sophisticated melodic system borrowing extensively from Karnatic classical music. The evidence is in the music itself as well as the oral traditions. When I asked Manoharan where he learned these rāgams used in teyyam, he explained that they come from his ancestors, that his father taught him, and his father learned from his father. Pressing further, I asked who originally created them and he promptly replied Purandaradasa, the fifteenth-century Kannada Saint composer considered to be the Father of Karnatic music, and Thyagaraja Swami, the most famous of the trinity of eighteenth-century Karnatic music composer-saints.

From expressive vocal idioms to instrumental expertise, Malayan employ a wide range of musical capabilities to ritualize teyyam performances. Figure 17 provides a schematic representation and transcription of the layers of musical activity that animate the process of calling a deity into a human-medium to facilitate direct interaction with a community of worship. The diagram consists of a series of concentric circles. The design reflects the agrarian cycle determining when teyyam festivals occur while also depicting the cyclical concept of time that regulates the flow of ritual action. The use of circles as opposed to linear lines mirrors the social organization of performance, whereby musicians envelop the *kōlakkāran* (spirit medium) with sound by gathering around him. Since it is ultimately the God or Goddess that determines the length, scale and scope, of each stage in the ritual, the circular framework is ma more accurate representation of the structural flexibility needed to accommodate the deity. Unlike linear forms that emphasize a beginning and an endpoint, cyclical structures enable the musicians to repeat as often as required to achieve the goals of the ritual.

In the smallest circle at the centre, the word *Śakti* is written to represent the feminine energy or life force that music arouses inside the body of the kōlakkāran in the process of incarnating the deity. Moving out from the centre, the four processes described in chapter 1 are labelled inside a sequence of concentric circles, from devotion, creativity, *bhāva* (evocation), to embodiment. Written vertically in italics on the left side, the expressive sound idioms are positioned where they occur in the ritual process: mantras are employed primarily as an expression of devotion by the kōlakkāran during the preliminary offerings; varaviḷi, or the calling of the spirit into the body from the universe, occurs when the creative actions begin overlapping with a heightened focus on bhāva (expression); tōṭṭam group singing then intensifies the mood to awaken the śakti; finally, āṭṭam (dance) occurs when the deity is fully embodied. This stage requires a boosting effect and shifting accompaniment for specific dance steps from the ceṇṭas. An example of a stanza from the tōṭṭam song for Ucciṭṭa Bhagavati starts at the middle of the left side of the circular staff. The words praise the qualities of the Goddess: "Your royal mind is like milk; your soul is as pure as crystal." Consisting of four measures of eight beats, the transcription illustrates the melodic outline and rhythmic structure of the strophic song. Represented below the text in the form of a pattern of open (o) and muted (/) drum strokes, the vīkkū part demonstrates how the rhythmic framework relates to the beats and the melodic line. The directional dotted lines tapering outwards towards the bottom illustrate how musical actions gradually heat the the Goddess, culminating in her dance. The arrows tapering inwards show the pleasing and cooling effect of the kurum kuḻal.

MALAYAN ACTIVE SONIC BEAUTY

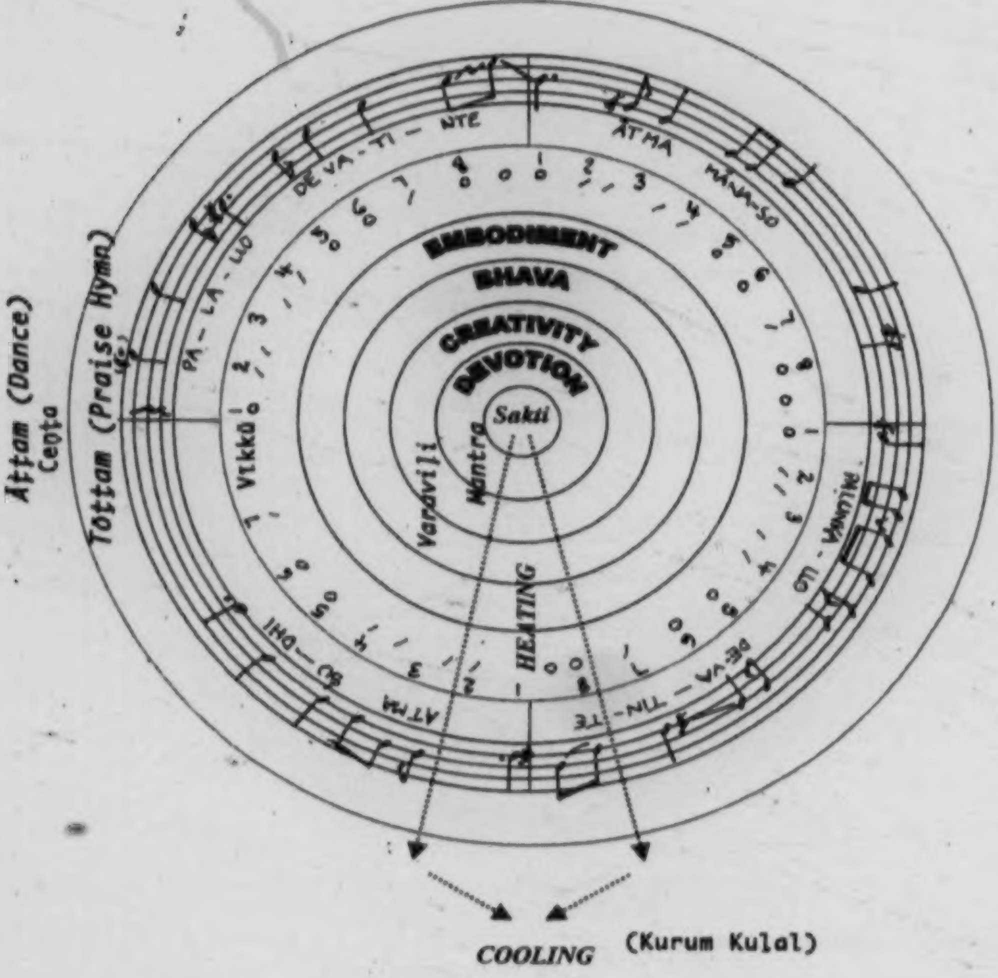
Āṭṭam (Dance)
Ceṭṭa
Tōttam (Praise Hymn)
PA - LA - LLO
DE VA - TI - NTE
ĀTMA
MANA-SO
PIUNNA - LLO
DEVA - TIN - TE
ATMA
SU - DHI
Vikkū
EMBODIMENT
BHAVA
CREATIVITY
DEVOTION
Sakti
Mantra
Varavili
HEATING
COOLING
(Kurum Kulal)

Figure 17. Musical Agency in Teyyam

C. Teaching Musicality as a Way of Life

If all these things were written on paper we could buy a book.

— Swamidasan, during a ceṇṭa lesson

The inheritance of caste-based professions in South Asian societies is regulated by distinct social bonds and customs that overlap broadly with religious experience. Dumont was one of the first to recognize the imperative to consider the larger web of relationships regulating how traditional trade knowledge is lived and passed on from one generation to another. His cautionary statement, "la caste n'est pas identique à une corporation de métier" (1966:123), warns against narrow attempts at explaining hereditary occupations in purely economic terms instead of as a way of life equally shaped by religious beliefs, rules governing marriage alliances, and political power. To his insights I add that hereditary professions provide an experiential basis for growing individual subjectivity and collective identity, which suggests that any attempt to consider how Malayan expand their heritable musicality must engage how productive sound capabilities are learned and lived in addition to describing their content. Like carpentry, fishing, weaving, or bronze casting, hereditary musical professions are traditionally taught according to pedagogical systems characterized by restrictive access limited to members of one kinship group, predominantly oral modes of instruction, informal observation of elders at work, and profound codes of respect, responsibility, and loyalty towards one's ancestors and network of kin relations. Hence the goal of this section is twofold: first, I describe the traditional way of learning how to perform musical duties at teyyam ceremonies; and second, I present some evidence of how Malayan are expanding hereditary learning environments by incorporating other means of training younger generations derived from state-sponsored institutional models associated with modern methods of education in the public sphere.

The fundamentally oral process of learning and teaching music in India mirrors the prominence given to inter-personal relationships between students and teachers in hereditary milieus. This unique social bond represents a particular form of discipleship known throughout South Asia as the *guru-śiṣyan parambara*, which from the Sanskrit translates roughly as teacher-student tradition. However, the term guru has a much broader meaning than the English word "teacher" conveys: it literally invokes the status of one who removes (*ru:* removal) darkness (*ga*) or ignorance. Highlighting the role of teachers as figurative leaders of people to brightness, a prominent local educator and policy maker in Dharmadam village described gurus as torchbearers. Although in South India the music guru-śiṣyan parambara is often associated with pre-colonial teacher-student bonds that call to mind images of high-caste students initiated on the verandas of Brahmin gurus, the pedagogical model applies to all castes that specialize in musical knowledge, including the Malayan, and it continues to serve an important educational function today. Nor is the system exclusively Hindu in conception, as Indian Muslims substitute the Persian-derived terms *ustād-śāgird* to describe a similar oral tradition of discipleship followed by Muslim kinship-based professional musician castes. The widespread influence of the guru-śiṣyan parambara has made it the primary oral vehicle for training and socializing musicians among all castes and communities of hereditary music specialists in South Asia.

Unlike institutional learning situations that rely on written curricula, the guru-śiṣya arrangement for ritual musician castes like the Malayan continues to be an exclusively oral, inter-personal mode of transmission. Consequently, the knowledge capabilities that hereditary musicians inherit remain accessible only as embodied orality in contexts of instruction and performance (Ong 1982). This contrasts with other examples where the guru-śiṣyan tradition is adapted to incorporate new audio and textual teaching resources, notably in Karnatic music education where pedagogy has been considerably systemized through a series of lesson books, which are now also available in audio and video media as well as online. The point being, that as long as musicality inherited through guru-śiṣya bonds continues to be taught exclusively as oral knowledge, Malayan will control access to the inner workings of their indigenous cultural property. Considering how ritual musical knowledge provides a foundation for expanding family artistic expertise while also maintaining continuity with ancestors in accordance with avakāśam rights and responsibilities, maintaining the esotericism of their musicality is key to safeguarding a critical pillar of their collective social imaginary. Even as fewer young people are taking an interest in the hereditary tradition, the community remains extremely secretive as to who they share their ritual music knowledge with and moreover, they normally refuse to teach people from outside their community.

Becoming a recognized disciple of a respected musician guru is an important life cycle event that requires ritual formalities to officially announce the change in status between a giver and a receiver of hereditary knowledge. When a Malayan master musician agrees to take on a new disciple, a date to begin the learning process is determined according to astrological calculations and an initiation ceremony is planned. The day on which training begins must be auspicious, meaning it should fall at a time when the transition between planetary stages is most likely to bring success for both the master and the disciple. Or put another way, the date should offer the best possible beginning in order to realize the goal of successfully acquiring knowledge. Malayan refer to the ideal time for initiating discipleship as the *vijayadaśāmi* day, from the word *vijayam*, success or achievement, and *daśāsandhi*, meaning transition from one planetary stage to another. This auspicious day occurs only once a year following the Hindu festival of *Navarātri* in October. If it is not possible to wait for this day, another time will be selected on the basis of relative auspiciousness, some days being better (more auspicious) than others. The importance given to determining the best possible moment for a student's initiation confirms that the ritual marks more than the commencement of a new period of study. Rather it is the solemnization of a special bond characterized by a level of devotion and affection between master and disciple, guru and student, that extends indefinitely after the period of training has ended.

Consistent with Malayan tradition, an initiation ceremony is held in the prayer room (*tekkatŭ*) of a guru's home on the first official day of study under his tutelage. A brass lamp (*vilaviḷakkŭ*) containing coconut oil is lit and placed in front of a shrine featuring images of pan-Hindu Gods and Goddess as well as local teyyam deities associated with the Malayan. Whereas the former are typically represented in printed versions of popular lithographs common throughout India, the teyyam deities may be present in the form of bronze figurines, masks and material attire used to create the form of deities at spirit-medium ceremonies, or photographs of an ancestor or household member in the form of a teyyam. Other *pūja* items arranged in the shrine include a small brass pot full of rice (*uruḷi*), a little bell, and a brass vase with a spout (*kiṇṭi*). Reflecting the community's role as musical servants of the divine, Malayan musical instruments such as a kurum kuḷal, ilatāḷam, or ceṇṭa sticks (*kōlŭ*) are also placed near the sacred imagery. The bright red cloth forming the background of the shrine indicates the special status accorded to Goddess worship in the community, as the colour red symbolizes all manifestations of the mother Goddess in popular Hinduism (Fuller [1993] 2004:34). For young Malayan seeking to become ritual musicians and teyyam performers under the guidance and authority of a guru, the most important presence of female divinity invited to witness the initiation is *Sarasvati*, the pan-Hindu Goddess of learning and music. While Sarasvati's blessing is commonly sought by most Hindus at the beginning of any new stage of learning, the presence of many other Goddesses in the Malayan prayer room underlines the special reverence paid to all manifestations of *śakti* in daily worship and at life cycle rituals.

A rough sketch of the sequence of ritual actions performed at a teyyam performer's initiation ceremony goes as follows. The event begins with a prayer offering to Ganapati, the pan-Hindu, popular elephant-headed God of auspicious beginnings whose blessings ensure the removal of all hindrances (*taṭasaṇṇal*) prior to embarking on new metaphorical or literal pathways. Next, a second offering (this time of food) is made to Sarasvati in the hope that her blessing will ensure successful transmission of knowledge. This offering (*nivēdyam*) would typically consist of banana, beaten rice (*avil*), and roasted paddy (*malar*) presented on a banana leaf. Only after performing these offerings to Ganapati and Sarasvati would the student then present a token gift to the master as an opening act of devotion and expression of gratitude for accepting him as pupil. Representing a commitment of service to the teacher, the student presents the offering in the form of a small amount of money wrapped in betel leaf in front of the shrine to receive blessings from the Gods before reaching the guru. This symbolic gift is called *gurudakṣina*, the giving of which in the context of an initiation ceremony represents the official inauguration of a discipular relationship with a guru. But as Neuman makes perfectly clear in his landmark study of Hindustani musicians, the act of giving money to a guru is not to be confused with payment in the form of tuition: "What the guru gives to his pupils is invaluable; it is an exchange in which the guru gives knowledge and the student reciprocates with services and gifts. It is, however, an unequal exchange; the student forever owes a debt to his guru, which he can never completely fulfill or repay" ([1980] 1990:51; see also Groesbeck 1995:330).

On several occasions, my guru, Swamidasan, among other Malayan teachers and consultants, insisted that the content they were teaching was not something that could be bought or sold. By stressing this point they converted financial remuneration into an offering that could never be sufficient in monetary terms. At my own initiation conducted on the day my ceṇṭa lessons began, I offered a gurudakṣina of 100 rupees cradled in betel leaves between the lamp and the images of deities installed at the shrine. The ceremony concluded when Swamidasan took a pair of roughly-cut ceṇṭa sticks that had been placed in front of the shrine and presented them to me. He later confirmed that this is how he began as a young boy: "At five years old the *ceṇṭa kōl* was formerly given in a ceremony. You light the lamp and you give the kōlŭ. You become a disciple (śiṣyan)" (July 17, 2003, Kathirur). After receiving the sticks, we exchanged respectful gestures, bowing with hands clasped in front of our foreheads, and with that the ritual bond was established, signalling the beginning of a guru-śiṣyan relationship focussed on instructing the basics of Malayan ceṇṭa musicianship.

Before the lessons began I insisted on being taught in the manner that a Malayan would teach one of their own. Recognizing that approaching a Malayan insider learning environment could only provide a vague idea at best, I nonetheless asked to follow the traditional stages Malayan children progress through in the process of training to play ceṇṭa. My status as a foreign adult male researcher, the inescapable socio-economic and linguistic gap between us, the careful discretion that regulated the knowledge they were prepared to share with an outsider—these factors muddied the extent to which I could imagine a typical Malayan traditional education to unfold. However, subsequent cross-checking through interviews with other Malayan musicians confirmed that Swamidasan's family did their best to recreate the sequence of skill acquisitions which most consultants confirmed to be conventional in the community. For instance, instead of starting my lessons on a ceṇṭa, I was given a wooden board about 35 by 20 cm (14 by 10 in.) with a short rectangular piece glued perpendicular at one side to raise the board up off its resting surface on an angle, like a foot stool missing a foot at one end. These are typically found in traditional Kerala kitchens where women use them to sit on while performing the rough tasks of food preparation, including peeling onions and other vegetables as well as making curry pastes. When Malayan boys begin learning ceṇṭa they start by beating the sticks on a stone or board like I had, which serves to strengthen the wrists and arms, develop greater accuracy and precision due to lesser flexibility of a hard substance compared with a drum skin, focus attention on the rhythmic concepts as opposed to the instrument itself, instil a deep sense of reverence and respect for what is essentially a sacred instrument, and avoid unnecessary wear on the drum and noise in the early stages of training. Equipped with a board and the pair of sticks ritually presented to me by Swamidasan, I was ready for the first lesson: the rhythmic patterns for invocatory musical prayers to Ganapati and Sarasvati that precede all musical occasions.[30]

When Karnatic classical music students begin a lesson or practice session they sing or play an offering to Sarasvati. It consists of a sequence of notes beginning with the tonic *sa*, then ascending to the fifth interval above (*pa*), followed by the higher octave *sa*, and back down again ending on *sa*. Similarly, classical Bharatanāṭyam dancers touch the ground with their hand followed by their forehead as a way of propitiating and obtaining the blessing of the patron Goddess of music before dancing. When Malayan train or perform on the ceṇṭa they also start by playing a short series of drum strokes to both Sarasvati and Ganapati in the form of a musical prayer. This is called *Sarasvati kai* and *Ganapati kai*[31] respectively, the word *kai* meaning "hand," or in this case, "the hand of" the God or Goddess in question. To play ceṇṭa successfully one must imagine that the sticks are an extension of the hands, and thus naturally drummers ask for their hands to be blessed by the grace of these two powerful deities in the Hindu pantheon.

Mirroring the widespread use of verbal mnemonic aids in South Asian percussion traditions (called *bols* in North India), each stroke of articulation in the rhythmic cycle of the propitiation prayers has a syllable attached to it. Nelson elaborates on this distinctive practice in the context of South India: "Musicians learn the sung or spoken phrases and the gestures together, concentrating more on the sequence of the gestures, sometimes on the shapes of the phrases. The ability to feel the phrase and the beat moving together gives musicians confidence because they can sense immediately whether a phrase is properly synchronized with the beat, and if not, how to make the necessary correction" (2000:138-39). Besides providing a way of internalising tāḷam rhythmic frameworks, this practice also provides an iconic memory device for the sequence of tone qualities each stroke is expected to execute, which indexes specific modes and places of articulation on the drum. For a Malayan beginner, however, the goal is to articulate the pattern with even, crisp alternating strokes in the centre of the surrogate drum. Starting with Ganapati kai, the prayers are played in an eight-beat metrical framework called *āti tāḷam* with no break in between them. The chart below indicates which hands are used (right or left) and how the verbal syllables fall within the metrical framework:

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[30] Groesbeck outlines a similar graduated process of stages followed by percussion gurus at the Kerala Kalamandalam, wherein students must reach a certain level of ability on surrogate drums before progressing to the ceṇṭa (1995:306).

[31] Not to be confused with Groesbeck's discussion of a ceṇṭa pattern called Ganapati kai as a cadential pattern in tāyampaka high-caste temple drumming (1999a).

Ganapati kai	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
/=Right 0=Left	/ / / 0 / 0 / / 0 / 0 / 0 /
Spoken syllables	TA— TA— TA RI KI DA TA—TA TI TA RI KI DA TA——
Sarasvati kai	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
	/ 0 / 0 / / 0 / 0 / 0 /
	TA TI—TA TI—TA—TA TI TA RI KI DA TA——

Constituting the pedagogical focus for my first lesson, these prayers taught me about how Hindu religious experience overlaps with musical pedagogy while at the same time they underlined that saying the rhythmic pattern is as important as playing them in the beginning.

In addition to introducing relatively accessible patterns as far as content is concerned, the two musical prayers presented a framework for instructing key technical and aesthetic principles. The lesson established that imitation and repetition are important aspects of the learning process wherein students are expected to watch and listen carefully to the teacher's performance before attempting the pattern on their own. Back and forth, in this way the teacher progressively points out different ways the student can improve. To cite one example, the main technique in ceṇṭa beating is a rolling one that requires tremendous flexibility and fluidity in the wrists in order to perform effectively. In particular the right hand must be incredibly supple to articulate a greater number of strokes per beat (*mātra*) compared to the left hand, which has a lower density and frequency of strokes. Thus the right-hand grip should be looser to enable a more flexible range of motion as well as greater efficiency due to use of less initial force when executing a stroke. The goal, according to Swamidasan, is to develop a rapid and robust *uruḷakkai*, or rolling hand.[32] When he noticed that I was applying too much tension or gripping the sticks too high, or that the angle wasn't quite right for one of the hands, he would patiently suggest I lower (choke up) my grip and relax the hand. Moreover, he also disclosed simple tricks of the trade that help improve movement in the wrists while practicing: for example, rubbing sesame seed oil (*nalleṇṇa*) thoroughly into the arms prior to long periods of practice loosens the joints while soothing any aches that develop from repetitive motion and strain. From my first lesson to the moment I was invited to play on a real drum, Swamidasan, his son Jitesh, and others in the community, never seemed to tire offering innocuous reminders to focus attention on gripping the sticks properly, all the while imaging that they are extended appendages of the arm. Grasping this concept was equivalent to mastering a fundamental principle of good ceṇṭa technique it seemed.

It should be clarified that to acknowledge the role of others in my experience learning an instrument is not to take any credit away from my principal guru, Swamidasan. More precisely, by foregrounding others who were actively involved in my training I highlight how Malayan guru-śiṣyan bonds are set within wider concentric social circles, progressing through the nuclear family and extending to the caste-community beyond. There were always two or three extra Malayan present at my lessons, some more actively involved in my instruction than others, but always participating in some respect regardless, if at the very least as a reassuring and discerning audience members. However, Jitesh, Swamidasan's youngest son at age 20, took an active pedagogical role to the point where even if Swamidasan was present he was sometimes given permission to lead the lesson. As the principal heir of the family's hereditary avakāśam, he was extremely skilled and knowledgeable in the art of teyyam and was therefore well positioned to make connections between the techniques and the ritual events for which their use is primarily intended, namely the way in which drummers are cued by the dance steps (kalāśam) of the deities. When Swamidasan would lead the lesson, Jitesh would often be playing the tāḷam to provide the vīkkū metrical framing for the rolling patterns that characterize the ceṇṭa part. If there was no drum close by, he would use his hands to clap the pulses of the cyclical framework. Figure 18 shows Jitesh demonstrating how to clap the tāḷam while Swamidasan plays the ceṇṭa pattern on his wooden substitute for a drum. To the left of the photo is respected community elder Swaminatan, who is also playing the tāḷam, though in his case using the left drum (*bayan*) of Jitesh's tabla.[33] This type of group pedagogical scene was typical of most of my lessons and indeed, except for my age and comparatively low level of Indian music sensibility, there was no indication that this kind of informal arrangement diverged markedly from the instruction Malayan children receive.

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[32] Interestingly, Groesbeck recounts how his instructors used the same term, uruḷakkai, to describe the type of motion required for developing good technique in tayambakka temple drumming (1995:313). Clearly, this is more evidence pointing to an intermingling of stylistic and technical musical knowledge between musicians' castes.

This more informal approach to the guru-śiṣyan setting by the Malayan provides a fitting segue into a discussion of the way the caste-community takes collective responsibility for training younger generations. Having confirmed that Malayan pedagogical oral tradition fits within the larger South Indian musical and cultural frames of reference by virtue of the use of a guru-śiṣyan model, I now explore other ways Malayan transmit their hereditary toolkits. It is appropriate to distinguish between musical skill sets that require a formal guru to develop proficiency, and other musical practices that are learned through observation and participation under the collective guidance of elders engaged in performing teyyam rituals. Here is where the pedagogical traditions of hereditary ritual musicians diverge from other professional musician communities that provide services that are primarily considered entertainment.

Most young Malayan boys learn the foundations of teyyam musical practices and their ritual uses by the age of twelve through annual attendance of festivals where their male kinfolk are engaged in seasonal work as well as fulfillment of avakāśam. Early knowledge they acquire through these experiences includes exposure to the foundation of the rhythmic system, the relationship between dance and tāḷam, the purpose and meaning of sound and other sensory ritual acts, the general melodic frameworks for the tōṯṯam songs, and the sequence of ritual stages that structure the spirit-medium event temporally and spatially. Throughout the festival season between December and April, they accompany their parents, brothers, uncles, and cousins to successive teyyam festivals, watching as the family and extended kin engage in a wide range of artistic tasks that make the worship of a deity in a human medium possible. Young girls occasionally attend the festivals with their mothers, but due to the possibility that they might unknowingly pollute sacred objects as they approach the age of puberty and begin having their menses, they remain on the periphery of most activities. The male kinsmen involve boys who are still too young to perform more physically and intellectually demanding jobs in several ways. For example, they are given the job of holding small stemmed lamps (*kuttu viḷakkŭ*) in front of the deity, fetching materials needed in the *aṇiyaṟa* (greenroom for preparing the form of the deity), and following the vīkkŭ in keeping time on the ilatāḷam (cymbals) (fig. 18). As they acquire more experience they begin playing ceṇṭa when the group is short of players and gradually they take on more responsibility in the preparation of the teyyam attire, including making thin strands for skirts with tender coconut fronds or making bracelets with flower petals.

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[33] The tabla, a North Indian (Hindustani) classical percussion instrument, has no role in teyyam musical performance. It is used here to imitate the timbral quality of the vīkkū and thus amplify the tāḷam to help the student (me) internalize the cyclical framework while clapping.

From a very young age, male children are expected to participate in the process of absorbing the complexity of synaesthetic actions unfolding in the devotional space of the kāvŭ. Swamidasan describes how he learned about music during his childhood:

> *Because one goes to the temple often when one is young, one is already used to these sounds. One has some inborn capabilities (janmasiddham), right? If a new person [someone from outside the community] begins to learn there will be difficulty in teaching. If the little calf of the buffalo (eruma: female buffalo) falls in the water, it will swim to the shore. Like that, I had more exposure (sambharkam: active form of exposure) to these [musical practices]. The temple that Jitesh [his son] is taking care of now, it was my father who used to run it (naṭattuka: make something happen). After that, then, I was the one who ran it. (July 17, 2003, Kathirur)*

Using the metaphor of a female buffalo and her calf, he captures the essence of the type of informal education Malayan receive while assisting elders in the ritual process.

Moreover, by connecting this context of learning with the transmission of the family's patrilineal hereditary right (avakāśam), Swamidasan reveals how a family's musical pedigree socializes a collective sense of Malayan musical identity.

Giving more specific situational examples, Swaminatan equally underlines the interplay between the role his father played as a guru and the knowledge gained from watching others in the community or extended family while performing teyyam:

> *We begin in early childhood. Then, when we go to a place where tira [teyyam] is held, we look at that person. Observing the tāḷam while beating the vīkkŭ, we learn tāḷam. Standing near the drum while it is beaten, we observed. Then when we come home the drum would be there. Taking it, would our fathers say that it should not be taken? Is it not for learning? While learning this way, when we made mistakes, father would tell us that it should not be done that way, but in this way. (July 6, 2003, Koorara)*

His account confirms that Malayan watch and learn by imitating what their elders and peers do in practice, starting with the tāḷams played by the vīkkŭ and the ilattāḷam. Only after mastering the basic rhythmic patterns can they progress to playing the more technically challenging instruments, namely the ceṇṭa or kurum kuḻal.

Moreover, an incident I observed in the field demonstrated that there does not necessarily have to be a large gap in age between young learners and more experienced members of the group who have the authority to correct mistakes. Attending a teyyam performance at the prestigious family kāvŭ of the *Koodali Thazhathavidu* near Kannur, I watched as a young boy in his early teens attempted to play the tāḷam on the vīkkŭ at a culminating point in the dance of the Goddess. As already mentioned above, this position in the ensemble is critical because of the way it keeps all the musicians playing together, thereby effectively sharpening the direction of the music for the deity that is arriving into the body of the *kōlakkāran*, circumambulating a sacred site in the kāvŭ, or dancing. The thin young man was struggling to keep and intensify the seven beat tāḷam that was required at that moment of the ritual, and so another older player finally forcefully took the drum out of the other's hands and immediately began pounding the pulses of the cycle vigorously, all the while holding the thinner boy's gaze as if to say "watch closely to learn how this is done." The thinner boy acquiesced without any resistance and watched timidly. At the end of the ritual when the ensemble finished playing, the robust

Malayan laughed good-naturedly and insisted the other take the instrument from him. However, the thin boy declined respectfully and left the scene looking fatigued, discouraged, and even a little fallen. What is significant about this scene is that the interaction took place between two young men (probably in their early-to-late teens) whose relationship did not appear to be one between a guru and student. That fact that one man felt he had the authority to take over without hesitating in order to restore the integrity of the music shows that there is collective responsibility for training others in the community. It also confirms that while opportunities are given to younger players, their education does not take precedence over the quality of the soundscape required to achieve the ritual objectives. In sum, while sound pragmatics evidently come first in the ritual arena, aspiring young musicians in the community must gain practical exposure, active as well as passive, in order to develop their capabilities in the hereditary context of ritual musicianship.

The musicality Malayan absorb through participation and observation in the presence of their elders and peers both remains anchored in this pedagogical site even as it builds a toolkit capable of raising the musician beyond neo-feudal limitations. Spatially, Malayan walk and ride along the pathways and waterways connecting the shrines under the ritual authority of their families' ceṟujanmams. In the space of the kāvŭ they learn about the ambiguous status associated with their community, a caste recognized as specialists with privileged access to powerful sacred sites, but which still faces intermittent undignified treatment from higher-caste members of the community of worship. Musical capabilities, though nurtured in such sacred sites of ambivalence, transcend these geographical anchors of identity to open other possibilities by virtue of its portability and invisibility. Physically, young Malayan learn how to embody musicality to influence the total body-scape of others gathered in the context of worship. This exposure and planting of musical subjectivity complements more systematic training later on when a boy is ready to become a formal śiṣya with his father, uncle, distant relative, or a guru outside the community in the case of learning another musical idiom.

There is a form of dynamic mutual nourishment that takes place between these two pedagogical modalities, which together provide a particular outlook on a Malayan way of life. Though not every Malayan goes through a progression of growing phases that begin with early exposure with family at the kāvū, followed by more focussed discipleship within the community, and finally ending with a period of learning outside the community at institutions or other guru-śiṣya arrangements, in my experience, this was a fairly common pattern. It does, however, suggest that oral pedagogical systems for some hereditary ritual musician communities are varied in their approach to imparting knowledge about different skill sets. Of course, this is even more the case in contemporary Kerala where the sequence of musical development phases follows no specific order except that they begin at the kāvū. Many Malayan skip the insider discipleship required to be a leading ritual performer in favour of other forms of institutionalized musical training, including private music tuition classes. Others go on to become proverbial "all rounders," an English expression probably borrowed from its use in the context of India's national sport, cricket, where it describes an athlete who can play all positions. These increasingly rare Malayan performers develop their ritual musicality under the guidance of several gurus, each one specializing in certain skills, including kurum kuḻal playing, more advanced ceṇṭa beating, tōṭṭam reciting, dancing, and knowledge of the identity of particular teyyams. Since all musical skills must be applied to teyyam deities in highly idiomatic fashion to achieve their devotional objectives, in many cases several aspects of musicality are embodied in a single guru who has considerable knowledge of particular deities.

Finally, following decisions to embark on alternative career paths, some Malayan never progress professionally beyond their early exposure to ritual music. It is not uncommon, however, to find these individuals expanding their musical horizons privately as a pastime, and moreover, many return when they are available to help those who continue to perform for a living. Though younger generations of Malayan children may not be exposed to the same extent their parents were, nearly every boy and girl receives some combination of informal and formal training in music. When we consider hereditary musicality more broadly as a way of life, these observations are more easily understood as typical of ritual musician communities that possess exclusive orally-transmitted knowledge, which they gladly supplement by drawing from a wider spectrum of available musical possibilities in South Asia. Knowing how to produce and exercise the evocative potential of music as agency in ritual arenas is the equivalent of learning how to swim. Even though all Malayan learn how to swim like the buffalo calf does, they do not all choose to swim in the river they were born into, nor does everyone choose to swim for a living; but they still know how to swim because knowing how to swim is part of knowing how to be a Malayan. According to elders in the community, young Malayan should be equipped musically to swim to the shore; they must have the capability to heal, awaken, heat, cool, and please through sound.

The final section of this chapter discusses parallel perspectives on music, ritual, and agency in ethnomusicological literature as a way of highlighting other examples of how sonic beauty has the capacity to ritualize people, places, and time.

D. Awakening the Divine: Sound and Agency in Teyyam

> The dyad between the classical and the non-classical was orchestrated through arbitrary notions of pure music as opposed to applied music, in which music was not necessarily of a simpler variety but one which applied music to a specific purpose like that of dance, drama, or ritual performance. (Subramanian 2006:18)

With the growing influence of practice theory on anthropological approaches to the study of ritual (Ortner 1984; Bell 1993) throughout the early 1980s, ethnomusicologists also began to ask more critical questions about the role of music in ritual performance. Rouget's *Music and Trance* (1985) was a watershed work in this area, not only for its comparative scope, but because of the way it captured the physicality and corporality of music. If music is considered to be fundamentally embodied as sonic action, it becomes possible to examine how sound can be used as a form of agency to accomplish specific goals. For example, it can be used to alter one's own sensory state of being as well as physically condition that of others providing they are in range and share the same meaning system. This capacity to act musically on oneself or another being is what underlies the thinking behind Rouget's distinction between someone who "makes music" and someone who "musicates," the latter referring specifically to a level of musical participation in which the participant alters their own state, whether it be a form of trance or possession. Conversely, the former refers to musician specialists who channel their actions towards others and thus do not reach an altered state of being as a result of focussing on other bodies in the ritual arena. What seems more insightful than this dichotomy of musical roles is the idea that there should be a verb based on the root "music" in order to express the active use of sound to bring about embodied change. As eloquently stated by Rouget, "Music is thus simultaneously an animation of things and a palpitation of the being" (1985:120). That many verbs expressing this active sonic potential are found in many languages in different regions of the world indicates that Rouget is indeed on to something.

One of the tasks that music is frequently mobilized to accomplish in the ritual life of diverse communities is healing. In some cases sound is literally believed to directly cure a wide range of illnesses, as in the case of Swamidasan's reference to a mantra used to cure rat fever in Malabar. In other contexts, sound is used to treat illnesses indirectly by harnessing or concretizing the power of supernatural forces. This is what happens in teyyam, where sound is the primary agency that calls, awakens, boosts, and pleases the deities, who then bestow their curative powers widely on the community of worship in the form of blessings. In a similar case, Roseman observes how the Temiar of Peninsular Malaysia rely on the power of traditional healers who sing dream songs to access a path that links them with a spiritguide, thereby constituting their healing capabilities (1991:131). Offering an African perspective, Friedson recounts how a traditional healer in Malawi employs the metaphor of a battery to describe how music generates the energy required to facilitate his ability to divine on behalf of afflicted patients (1996:33). The centrality of drumming in the process of heating the spirits in Tumbuka divination rituals prompts Friedson to go so far as to describe the agency of music as "part of an indigenous medical technology" (ibid.:31). Malayan musical practices in teyyam join these ethnographic examples in presenting compelling evidence of a widespread understanding of the aesthetic potential of music as an instrument of healing, either directly or indirectly, but always affectively.

Resolving the tension in music scholarship between discourses emphasizing functionality and those privileging aesthetics in musical practice has been a significant challenge in ethnomusicology. While non-Western classical traditions have managed to bridge the divide between insider and Western aesthetics due to their textual legitimacy and purely aesthetic sensibility, there is an underlying tendency in Western music scholarship to lift ritual musical traditions out of their living context and reframe them according to European aesthetic order. This is in part because musicians who provide ritual services are most often classified under folk taxonomies that tend to emphasize functionality at the expense of aesthetic sensibilities, or equally focus on aesthetics at the expense of agency.

Moreover, as Tarabout points out in his case study of ritualists who specialise in drawing sacred designs of deities (*kaḷam*) from central Kerala, exclusion from the national and regional art institutions and relegation to the domain of folklore has a powerful impact on the social status of ritual artists (2003). Working in the same region as Tarabout, ethnomusicologist Guillebaud provides a critical analysis of how the radio institutionalizes this hierarchy ranging from classical at the top, to semi-classical, and finally the category indigenous, formerly known as folk (2003). Explaining how a vast range of ritual musical idioms native to Kerala became lumped under one genre label, she exposes the tension that exists between the pragmatic use of music and the institutional demand that they be evaluated according to one foreign set of criteria and graded vaguely according to regional reputation for interpretive authenticity (ibid.:140). Classical idioms are the only genres to be evaluated according to a complex set of emic criteria, the same basic framework that is misguidedly used to assess ritual music competency. For example, Guillebaud argues that evaluating how capable performers are at "playing in perfect harmony" implies contrasting performance priorities and sensibilities. In the analysis of tōṯṯam singing above, clearly there is an equally different set of aesthetic principles guiding musical interaction aimed at achieving a specific ritual objective. If the "general presentation" (an All India Radio criteria for evaluating indigenous music) of Malayan musicians were assessed in a studio setting, it would be impossible to appreciate the aesthetic subtleties invigorating the transformation they effect in the spirit-medium, including the thick textures created through harmonic clusters and varied tone quality due to the inclusion of a female voice. While classical and light-classical hereditary musicians have also faced many challenges in the process of adapting to institutional patronage (Neuman [1980] 1990; Manuel 1989), it seems reasonable to conclude that the process has been even more disempowering for non-classical musicians as they struggle to have their artistic capabilities recognized and valorized on their terms.

To be sure, the possibility of evaluating ritual music according to producers' aesthetic parameters within modern institutional patronage poses serious challenges. In addition to the practical issue of time constraints, whereby all musicians are required to condense performances to fit much shorter time frames, Hindu ritual musicians must abandon their fundamental organizing premise to facilitate communication with deities. To borrow Austin's terms again, the meaning of their locutionary act is shifted away from the task of communicating with the supernatural or a community of worship, towards a mass audience of listeners for the purpose of entertainment. In this process, the sites, objects, and social relations that anchor musicians firmly in a context that feeds the energy of their ritual musicality and renders it meaningful are absent. Instead, musicians are compelled to accept a radically inefficacious musical frame of reference, at least by the standards to which their idiom is measured. The stakes go much further than this, though, as musicians also worry about the potential risks of angering supernatural forces by way of unintentional perlocutionary effects while performing in secular settings. Whether ritual art forms are recontextualized for viewing through a Western aesthetic lens on high-brow concert stages, or subsumed under homogenized categories of regional inferiority in their own countries, the problem of finding an appropriate way of approaching and representing the aesthetics of pragmatic musicality should be an important concern for all stakeholders.

One way forward in the search for new paradigms for interpreting music in ritual scholarship is to continue to find more compelling terms for describing how music employs a set of discerning aesthetic parameters to ritualize spirits, people, events, and places. John Chernoff refers to this musical realm of practice in a West African setting as exercising "aesthetic effectiveness" (1979:30). Emphasizing the healing properties attributed to musical acts in Temiar ethnomedicine systems, Roseman calls for more critical focus on the "pragmatics of aesthetics" "to investigate how appropriate forms of sound, movement, color, and odor become repositories of cosmological and social power" (1991:11). While both authors emphasize the efficacy of their respective case studies of ritual musicality, neither choice of expression captures the fact that ritual music pleases aesthetic sensibilities within the community of worshippers, among the participants themselves as well as their Gods. Directing the focus away from mechanically-sounding functional terms like "efficacy" and "pragmatics," Tarabout invokes a broader concept of "active beauty," which I think encapsulates both dimensions of ritual performance well (2003). His term allows for a more elastic interpretation of how musicians exercise agency through specific forms of action, yet it also highlights that this performative process always involves pleasing or arousing the senses in some way. It also provides an excellent springboard for the next chapter by opening up the possibility of considering how musicians use the evocative power of their craft to extend their musicality to pursue socio-musical mobility beyond ritual.

Figure 13. Krishnan Panikkar keeps the *tāḷam* on the *vīkkŭ* during a teyyam ritual

Figure 14. Malayan *ceṇṭa* players boost the *śakti* of *Viṣṇumūrtti* teyyam while watching for changes in the *tāḷam* suggested by the performer's steps

Figure 15. My guru, Swamidasan, teaches me how to use a piece of broken glass to taper the thickness of my *ceṇṭa* sticks

Figure 16. A Malayan plays the *kurum kuḻal* to please and cool *Poṭṭan* teyyam

Figure 18. Jitesh (right) shows how to clap the *tāḷam* played by Swaminatan (left) on the bayan drum (tabla). Swamidasan (back) plays the *ceṇṭa* part on a board

Figure 19. Nikhil (age 11) keeps the rhythmic framework by playing the *ilattāḷam*, a pair of cymbals held together with a cord. *Ceṇṭas* are played in the foreground

CHAPTER 4

LABOURING FOR SOCIO-MUSICAL MOBILITY: THEORETICAL MOORINGS

The previous chapter demonstrated how musicians facilitate ritual communication and transfiguration by awakening and calling divine power (*śakti*) into a human medium at *teyyam* spirit medium ceremonies. Joining powerful critiques of anthropology's visual bias (Feld 1982; Ong 1982), I explored how the concept of functional beauty complements Malayan accounts of the significance of sound as the primary ritualizing agent in the teyyam performance process. The central task of this chapter is to introduce the theoretical orientations that provide a lens for interpreting socio-musical mobility among the Malayan in Northern Kerala.

As a way into the discussion it is useful to recall the main thrust of the previous argument. I contended that interpretations treating the ritual role of musicians as passive accompanists fail to recognize the dynamic constitutive use of sound. Moreover, nor can purely functional descriptions of sound accurately capture the vitality of musical acts, since they imply a lack of aesthetic criteria for distinguishing between greater or lesser evocative capabilities in the process of engaging divine and human listening audiences. Alternatively, the idea of active beauty recognizes that the primary purpose of some musical acts concerns the efficacy with which a performance succeeds in accomplishing a ritual task. If we accept Malayan assertions that sound performance is evaluated according to the skill, energy, expressive range, and sensitivity with which a musician plays, it is tenable to assume that some semblance of the virtuosic and contemplative understanding of musical beauty associated with Western aesthetic philosophy (Goehr 1992; Johnson 1995) is also consistent with South Indian non-classical musical sensibilities. Actively and aesthetically efficacious in the teyyam ritual arena, music, then, not only has constitutive and evocative meaning, but also force—musicians do things with sound (Austin 1962).

If musical acts are indeed transformative in some ritual contexts, can we not stretch the metaphor of active beauty to describe in more general terms the productive use of music as a means for improving the socio-economic status of families? I address this question by introducing theoretical tools which I believe establish the constitutive force of music as a premise encompassing all social fields of cultural production from rituals, to concert settings, to political rallies. Anchored in the regional dynamics of a South Asian case study, the discussion is intended as a preliminary contribution to the development of a practice-based theory of socio-musical mobility. I hope, however, it will also prove relevant to a variety of productive musical arrangements outside of South Asia, and in the process, steer an inversion of the dominant concern with how music works to confront how the work of musicians creates socio-musical opportunities.

A. Engaging Musicians Materially

Introduction

Although issues of identity and modernity have garnered serious interest in music scholarship, few studies have approached musical activities as a form of *work*, yet labour is instrumental in shaping understandings of who we are in relation to others.[34] Moreover, for musicians who produce live music for commodity exchange in hybrid socio-economic arrangements, opportunities for improving social mobility depend on labour, hence the labour of music is key to understanding musical selves and the aspirations for mobility they engender. Accordingly, I proceed from a dual premise: 1) that live music is productive, and 2) that labour provides a heuristic category for interrogating how musicians pursue possibilities for improving their socio-economic situation. For the Malayan in Malabar, hereditary musical assets provide a versatile means for earning a livelihood in new fields of cultural production that were created in the wake of grassroots indigenization of Marxist ideologies—one of Kerala's alternatively modern dynamics.

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[34] There are few notable exceptions that come to mind: In the popular music field, McCleod (1993) offers a rich ethnographic account of the business culture of music and how club date (live band) musicians work for a living in the New York City area; also taking a musician-centred approach, Hutchinson (1994) highlights the figurative speech used by an Irish Uilean pipe legend that conceptualizes musical training as a form of manual labour; finally, in addition to the works discussed in this chapter there are a number of historical studies that examine the economy of musicians during specific time periods and places (Benoît 1982; Zucchi 1992). Overall, it seems fair to say that scholarship engaging critically with the political economy of musicians have been infrequent at best.

Recognizing the possibility for engaging Marx ethnographically, I turn to a re-interpretation of some aspects of his theory of labour and value as one direction for interpreting this case study.

To elucidate the relationship between musical labour and social mobility is to go beyond demonstrating how musicians create useful products or services: it must show how labour and mobility relate to the social identity of the labourer. Categories of group ascription and affiliation, including ethnicity, race, gender, sexuality, class, religion, place, caste (in South Asian communities), kinship lineage, and many more, create a tangled web of subjectivity that complicates perceptions of socio-economic status, making attempts at assessing socio-musical mobility challenging to say the least. A theory of socio-musical mobility must be capable of reconfiguring concepts of musical subjectivity to account for labour as a constitutive force in the process of formulating identities. It must also demonstrate how already-existing identities shape the possibilities for labouring musically. Accordingly, I insist that musicians are presented with unique opportunities to claim agency by expanding rather than changing the contours of their identity (socially and musically). Problematizing social mobility among musicians involves confronting the dynamics of this dialectical tension between identity and labour against the backdrop of modern social imaginaries: "the ways people imagine their social existence, how they fit together with others, how things go on between them and their fellows, the expectations that are normally met, and the deeper normative notions and images that underlie these expectations" (Taylor 2004).

In the sections below I develop a theoretical position that can be applied to the political economy and creative milieus in which Malayan musicians produce music. Drawing connections between their labour, identity and socio-musical mobility requires a musician-centred focus rather than a conventional music-centred paradigm to ensure that musical practice is confronted materially as well as socially and aesthetically.

Mobility and Modernity: Two Sides of the Same Coin

Throughout this dissertation the term "mobility" is mainly used in its figurative sense as the process whereby individuals or groups pursue strategies for improving their social standing in relation to other individuals or groups against the background of a fluid, hierarchically organized society. The concept's origins can be traced to the nineteenth-century industrial expansion and mechanization that witnessed the rise of the bourgeoisie and the working classes, and thus "social mobility" presupposes a society whose sociality is considerably influenced by modern Western ideological climates and productive arrangements. Describing a constellation of social practices and ambitions appearing in the public sphere of burgeoning capitalist societies, the concept is historically specific to the period in which global capitalism became the dominant mode of production in Western nation-states, roughly around the mid-1800s.

It is equally relevant here to consider the literal meaning of mobility. It was no coincidence the act of climbing upwards on a metaphorical "social ladder" became associated with an act of mobility, which literally refers to the capacity to be in motion. Even as capitalist relations of production and technological innovation imposed new restrictions on living conditions, they also encouraged and compelled people to become more mobile. Thus unprecedented capabilities to be in motion stimulated new horizons of possibilities for social advancement, and mobility came to serve as a metaphor for expressing the potential for achieving a higher social standing in society. Given the current scope and scale of transnational exchange and movement, it is curious that the link between travel and social status is relatively under-explored in the social sciences with the exception of research on consumerism in the tourism industry (Bruner 2005; Urry 1990). Appadurai probes this double meaning of mobility (figurative and literal) under modernity when he comments on the broadening scope for positioning open to flows of people in the current phase of globalization, whereby "more persons in more parts of the world consider a wider set of possible lives than they ever did before" (Appadurai 1991:197).

Going further, another meaning of mobility needs fleshing out before I consider some problems confronting my use of the concept. In addition to the literal and figurative meanings, the term also can be used in a transitive sense, to mobilize, which introduces an agency component by highlighting how subjects actively mobilize and organize animate or inanimate objects to accomplish specific goals. In the context of the case study introduced earlier and the theory of musical mobility that this chapter proposes, the transitive dimension combines with the other two uses to conceptualize musicians as active agents who mobilize their assets to improve their socio-economic situation as much as possible. There are, however, conceptual issues that need to be considered before I address how the concept of mobility invites us to consider a different approach to musical subjectivity.

To begin with, the most common assumption about the figurative meaning of mobility in modern societies is that the term implies directional and spatial orientations which evoke a teleological image of individuals climbing a social ladder beginning at a given point A and proceeding to a higher, more desirable, point B. Whether pursued collectively or individually, the structural emphasis on endpoints here creates a teleological, spatial and temporal framework narrating movement from one discrete social position to another within a hierarchy that involves changing an old set of identity markers for new ones. Research on social mobility with considerable structural-Marxist intellectual baggage tends to frame mobility as largely a matter of changing one's position in the class hierarchy (Gramsci [1971] 1996; Willis 1978; Hebdige 1979), whereas scholars with post-structuralist leanings have a tendency to downplay the significance of class-based identities, preferring instead to interrogate mobility as a process of signification from one mediated identity complex to another, sometimes to the point where larger conditions of inequality, power, struggle and dominance are left underexplored (Baudrillard 1981; Morley and Robins 1995).

In both cases identities appear to precede mobilities as the start and destination point in a hierarchical ordering of society. To attain a higher status from a lower rung on the ladder one must replace old identities with new ones. According to this line of reasoning, the failure to part with older identities must result in less capacity to be mobile, or even immobility, since it is assumed that the capacity to formulate an upwardly mobile identity hinges on distancing oneself from previous selves or replacing an "old" self.

As a consequence of this structural presumption—that mutually exclusive static levels of social positioning or structures ordered according to higher degrees of progress and status comprise a pre-existing field—conventional understanding of mobility does not allow for using the term to describe the agency and flexibility with which people pursue improvements in socio-economic status. For example, there is frequently a tacit assumption that old identities tend to be immobile in contrast with the mobility of new modern subjectivities typically colonized either outside or within Western nation-states according to stages of modernization ranging from pre-modern to the fully modernized Other.

Chakrabarty has tried to empty the term's explicit periodizing import, but it is difficult to imagine how pre-modern could be read otherwise (1996). Eurocentric interpretations of non-capitalist concepts of time compound the spatial dichotomy by portraying Other identities as frozen in an immobile past and modern identities as historically constituted by the influence of global forces that establish the "freedom" of mobility (Prakash 1990,1996). In the 1980s and 90s, post-structuralism challenged cultural theorists to rethink Eurocentric dichotomies of subject and object, pre-modern and modern, proletariat and capitalist, thereby stimulating new thinking about the coexistence of different ways of being (Clifford 1986; Fabian 1983; Marcus and Fischer 1986). Now most scholars generally accept that a range of positionings are possible within larger systems of capitalist exchange and that no community or individual can claim to be outside the scope of modernity (Blim 2000; Gaonkar 2000; Knauft 2002).

But if everyone experiences some local configuration of modernity, why are representations that distinguish between old and new identities still common, the former rooted in non-capitalist social formations and viewed as rigidly immobile, and the later viewed as inherently mobile with capitalist social relations gradually subsuming other non-capitalist social arrangements? The view persists, at least tacitly, that upward mobility is contingent on an individual's capacity to shed old pre-modern identities in favour of modern identities. Reconsidering this premise, a theory of musical mobility must involve rethinking the relationship between modernity and musical subjectivity. It must also bring criticism to bear on music scholarship's tendency to separate musicians from the sound traces of their labour.

To my knowledge there are no studies about the relationship between social mobility and music from the standpoint of production. There have, however, been several attempts to explore how individuals and groups consume musical products as part of articulating lifestyles in the process of formulating social identities. Much of this work stems from Bourdieu's seminal study of French consumer society, *La distinction* (1979; *Distinction* 1984), which analyzes the distribution of cultural goods, practices, and mannerisms as symbolic capital correlated with social dispositions marking identity status and affiliation. Another important influential movement fusing Gramsci's Marxian theory of praxis and Barthes' semiology can be traced to the Birmingham School of Cultural Studies founded by Dick Hebdige and Stuart Hall. In both of these critical directions the focus is on Western industrialized societies and consumer acts as means of articulating identity, as lifestyles whether in the form of resistance or domination. Examples of how music can be used as a resource for achieving social mobility have concentrated on how consuming musical products becomes a strategy for distinguishing oneself and one's status from that of others (Bourdieu [1979] 1984; Osella and Osella 2001). Frequently absent from these accounts of music as a consumable resource are the producers of the tangible recordings or live performances: the musicians.

In order to shift the focus onto musicians and musical production I take up some of the issues contributors raise in Qureshi's edited volume of Marxist-inspired approaches to music theory (2002). Aimed at engaging musicians' social mobility from a political economy perspective, my approach is particularly owing to the articles that examine relations of musical production using Marxist-derived categories and theoretical frameworks (Olmsted, Stokes, Qureshi 2002). But before discussing some of these authors' insights it is instructive to engage Marx through the lens of Postone's recent reinterpretation of the theory of labour value (1993). Combined with research on the political economy of music, his important work provides a basis for discussing conceptual foundations prior to taking up specific issues related to socio-musical mobility.

First, assuming labour is a useful category for illuminating what (Malayan) musicians do, is it applicable to non-Western social realities given its historically specific and Eurocentric origins? Secondly, when, where, and how (under what conditions) do musical practices become labour? Or, how is music constitutive of and constituted by artistic labour? In what ways are the values of musical performance determined in alternative or hybrid modernities shaped by a combination of capitalist and non-capitalist practices and limiting contexts? After a discussion of Postone's theoretical contribution and its implications for conceptualizing artistic performance as labour, to confront these issues I revisit Attali's important work on the political economy of music, *Bruit* (1977), before turning to some key contributions on the subject from Qureshi's volume. Although in the course of these discussions I move away from the mobility topic in order to flesh out some concepts fundamental to my approach, I return to the main purpose of the chapter in a section arguing that Bourdieu's practice theory and recent research on social capital by Nan Lin offer a productive prism for analyzing music's material and social basis in society. At the same time, I remain sensitive to the fluid realities of social imaginaries where possibilities do exist for becoming mobile without rejecting identities rooted in non-capitalist socio-economic systems.

To confront the problems associated with applying Western theoretical frameworks to non-Western realities I take up Chakrabarty's postcolonial critique and consider how his concept of alternative modernities offers a more compelling way to examine local, non-Western global stories like those of the Malayan in Kerala. After outlining tools from Marxism, political economy approaches to music, and Bourdieu and Lin's theory of symbolic capital, the chapter concludes by drawing on the Malayan case study to outline a model for resisting the straightjacket of genre-centred research by analyzing how musicians are uniquely, yet also vulnerably, positioned to pursue social mobility across widely varying conditions of modernity.

B. Mobilizing Marx

For more than a century the writings of Karl Marx have provided immeasurable intellectual nourishment for scholarly and non-scholarly projects aimed at coming to terms with the entangled social, political, economic, and cultural web of humanity. Besides building on Marx's historical critique of capitalism, Marxist scholarship under various mutations has consistently seized on his commitment to problematizing human relations and interactions with the material world ranging over contemporary and historical contexts for the express purpose of provoking social change. History in Marx's imaginary is the interplay between active human agencies, their productive relations, struggles, material engagements, and socio-political aspirations. The result: even across the cacophony of divergent perspectives and priorities claiming allegiance to aspects of a Marxian world view, most Marxist-oriented scholarship has consistently upheld the belief that ideational action can bring about changes in material and social realities and thereby shape the course of history. Perhaps more than ever before recent directions in Marxist political philosophy, ranging from the New Left to anti-globalization movements, reach for this aspect of Marx's work to demonstrate his axiom that there is dynamic potential in human agency.

Sketching a genealogy of Marxist scholarship, from Soviet-style "actually existing" socialism, through French structuralism, Frankfurt School critical theory, British Marxist Historicism, to World Systems theory and Post-Fordism, is clearly outside the objectives set for this chapter. Instead, Postone's work in particular stands out for having launched a persuasive defence of Marxism's contemporary relevance in the face of relentless and erudite postmodern criticism. Following Postone, I maintain that Marx remains perhaps the richest source of concepts and ideas for problematizing modernity and capitalism, providing we bear in mind the imperative to historicize his work and confront the mistake of reading schools of Marxist interpretation as congruent with Marx's writings.

Postone's Reinterpretation

Postone's main argument begins by refuting decades of Marxist scholarship premised on the view that Marx's theory of labour value was intended as a critique of capitalism from the transhistorical standpoint of labour. To substantiate this view Marxist scholars typically refer to an opening passage in *Capital* where Marx declares that labour is the source of all value (Marx [1867] 1995:127), which they interpreted to mean that labour is the only constant variable that can be used to compare economic histories and hence class struggles fuelled by exploited labour were the basis of the capitalist mode of production. Labour, from this viewpoint, is treated as a totalizing category found in all histories of humanity, rather than conceptualized as a part of a particular productive arrangement wherein relations between people at work come to serve as a historically specific form of social mediation with equally distinctive consequences, for example, the condition of deepening social alienation.

This conventional premise is well illustrated in a recent series of introductory lectures on Marxism by a reputable British historian when he claims to refute Marx's thesis that labour is the source of all value by pointing to instances where it is not a quantifiable element influencing the production of value, citing ownership of unproductive land and prestigious art work as proof (Wolff 2002:118). Postone would say he misses the point Marx was trying to make—that capitalism evolved a particular labour process in which work mediates between people and products in unprecedented forms and hence new categories are needed to describe and criticize the impacts of these forms on socio-economic, political, and cultural spheres of human interaction. Marx's analysis hinges on the categories of value, abstract labour, commoditiy, and capital, and this is where Postone sees potential for using Marx to identify the limits and possibilities of social practice in capitalism. This would support the hypothesis that capitalism cannot be overcome by a class revolution aimed at taking control over the mechanisms and institution of distribution, but would depend on the abolishment of the particular structured and structuring labour process under capitalism. The term labour is itself a capitalist construct connoting a historically-specific form of social mediation.

In contradistinction to conventional Marxist-inspired scholarship, Postone's reading of Marx is non-evolutionary, in other words, it does not view class struggle as the engine that will eventually push capitalism to the brink before evolving into communism. Indeed, he points out that this misunderstanding goes a long way to explaining the failure of the socialist state in Russia and Eastern Europe where labour practices went unchanged under a new system of control over markets and distribution. Postone argues against approaches that interpret Marx literally and treat labour as a universal, constant category of human activity from which a critique of capitalist modes of distribution of commodities, including the free market and private property, can be launched. He offers instead a reinterpretation of Marx's theory based on careful readings of *Capital* and especially the *Grundrisse*, insisting that labour under capitalism is equally constitutive of social relations and therefore as much the object of Marx's critique as are commodities and their distribution.

By making labour in capitalism the object of criticism Postone reorients Marx's theory of labour value to include categories of production as much as categories of consumption or distribution that have typically centred on the circulation of the commodity-form. The implications for using Marx to theorize about agency and production in capitalism are compellingly stated: "Within such a framework, then, the issue is not so much whether people should try to shape their world—they already are doing so. Rather, the issue is the way in which they shape their world and, hence, the nature of this world and its trajectory." (1994:384) This is the basis for claiming that by examining how labour works socially and economically in capitalist productive arrangements Marx does in fact offer a way of analyzing qualitative historical changes in the constitution of subjectivities under various late capitalisms (Blim 2000).

Moreover, Postone takes issues with the postmodernist charge that Marxism is inherently unequipped to problematize the local and global dynamics of modernity due to its totalizing Eurocentric worldview of capitalism expanding relentlessly, either bearing progress or misery depending on where one is situated on the political spectrum. He argues for historicizing Marx's labour theory of value and thereby opens the way for accommodating postmodern concerns by maintaining that Marx's theory is more flexible than it has been given credit for and thus capable of serving as the basis for a critical social theory by continuing to offer heuristic and versatile power for problematizing how abstract forms of labour produce value under capitalism. More importantly, his reinterpretation opens the possibility for considering a wider scope of available positions at greater or lesser distance from labour's social mediation under capital within the global capitalist framework/system and thereby established the "groundwork for a sociohistorical theory of subjectivity" (1993:38). Postone's theory is important because it demonstrates the relevance of Marx today by recovering production, agency, social relations, and historical dimensions in Marx's work.

Chakrabarty's Postcolonial Critique

If Postone's reinterpretation of Marx opens up possibilities for considering the influence of diverse social imaginaries in capitalism, Chakrabarty goes a step further in *Provincializing Europe* (2000) and develops a postcolonial critique that reconciles Marx's influence on the Indian subaltern studies project while also rejecting totalizing uses of Marxism. Drawing from his research on jute factory workers in colonial West Bengal, he highlights the discrepancy between the history capitalism configures for itself as leading up to total sublimation of non-capitalist practices and the heterogeneous histories that emerge in the aftermath of encounters between capital forces and non-capitalist worldviews and lived experience.

To support his argument that Marx did not intend for his critique to be read as a teleology of history(2000:63), Chakrabarty turns to Marx's discussion of the history of money and the commodity-form in which both categories are clearly recognized as existing prior to capitalist relations and thereby rooted in a form of difference that eventually encountered and modified capitalist productive arrangements rather than merely serving as a precondition pointing to a unilinear trajectory towards the inevitability of capitalist relations (ibid.:64). His theory of Type 1 and Type 2 histories describes the tension and dynamics between the Eurocentric teleological view of capitalist expansion (Type I)—the universal history of capital—and encounters with an archive of non-capitalist difference that inevitably shapes socio-economic and political relations on the ground. In his own words: "Capital brings into every history some of the universal themes of the European Enlightenment, but on inspection the universal turns out to be an empty place holder whose unstable outlines become barely visible only when a proxy, a particular, usurps its position in a gesture of pretension and domination" (ibid.:70).

Notwithstanding his compelling re-appropriation of Marx, however, Chakrabarty's theoretical preoccupation and disciplinary location among historians prevents him from presenting ethnographic evidence for his argument that "globalization of capital is not the same as capital's universalization" (ibid.:71). A subsequent work, *Habitations of Modernity*, gets closer to the ethnographic implications of his theory for understanding historical difference, but nonetheless remains distant in its focus on written discourses rather than on lived histories (2002). The two types of histories that Chakrabarty argues are constitutive of the plural modernities that we live in within the general framework of global capitalism are never quite as palpable as one expects, which has led others to probe further as to how Type 2 histories have encountered and modified the Type 1 evolutionary narrative of capital.

Offering one example from the standpoint of ethnomusicology, Martin Stokes takes Chakrabarty's theory to an ethnographic musical domain where he underscores evidence of Type 2 histories that surface where the grand narratives of unilinear progress are interrupted by non-capitalist elements (2002). By exploring different ways of positioning within capitalism through his own ethnographic experiences with two Turkish musicians and literature from other ethnographic work in Sardinia, Romania, and Algeria, he demonstrates how capitalism is multilinear, constituted as much by interaction with historical difference as the temporal horizon it configures for itself. Yet even as Stokes persuasively succeeds at grounding Chakrabarty's Marxist-inspired theoretical propositions ethnographically, his description of non-capitalist encounters from the point of view of type 1 history as a form of "excess" generated by capital itself seems to undermine possibilities for theorizing agency in the overall framework of Chakrabarty's postcolonial critique (Stokes 2002:150).

Although he claims that the "excess," read non-capitalist sentiments, customs, traditions, etc…, constitutes a form of subjectivity in its own right, evidence of claiming agency in this interactive process suggests that non-capitalist positioning cannot be explained as a by-product of capital's universal subjectivity producing more than is needed. Depending on the circumstances and mode of interaction or articulation, non-capitalist subjectivities may reject, resist, accommodate, or integrate aspects of capitalist incursions on their own terms. Conversely, the concept of "excess" points to something after the fact, of no consequence, or lacking the power to shape subjectivities. As explored in subsequent chapters, the Malayan in Kerala demonstrate otherwise, thus serving as a reminder that musicians do not make such tidy distinctions between the "two histories of capital" in the process of living both type 1 and type 2 at the same time within one horizon of possibilities for formulating musical selves.

Recognizing Postone's call to keep agency at the centre of theoretical attempts to re-mobilize Marx, Stokes and Chakrabarty provide a way of justifying the use of labour as part of a theoretical framework for explaining non-Western musical subjectivities. In doing so they offer a way of responding to the first question raised in the opening of this chapter concerning the applicability of the concept of "labour" in non-Western social milieus. Indeed, Chakrabarty insists that it could not be otherwise since the non-Western and Western are inextricably entangled and mutually constitutive. But as long as his theory of capital's origins in historical difference remains abstractly distant, rather than grounded in concrete examples from lived experience, it lacks explanatory scope and depth. Although he highlights the influence of Marx on the Indian subaltern studies movement and intellectual life in general, he does not consider how Marxism has been effectively indigenised in India on a more pragmatic populist level in regions where the Communist Party of India (CPI) and Communist Party of India (Marxist) (CPM) have strong support at the grassroots level, notably in the states of West Bengal and this study's ethnographic domain in Kerala. The CPM in particular has effectively indigenized and popularized a Marxist concept of labour and associated categories like capital, wage, commodity, and value. Consequently, in case studies in these regions of the Indian Subcontinent, it is not only appropriate, but essential, that the term labour be used to describe what people do for a living since it is a category they themselves employ in everyday speech.

In Kerala, the Malayalam word for labour, *toḻil* is mainly associated with manual trades and factory work as a result of widespread unionization and labour legislation (Heller 2001). However, artists working in different settings and relations of patronage have increasingly developed a concept of remunerated performances as a form of labour. For example, in an interview focused on occupational training, respected elder, Swaminathan, elaborates on the labour (toḻil) involved in performing on the *kurum kuḻal* double-reed instrument:

> There is a lot of labour involved in learning this. To bring out ragas like *mohanam* and *bhairavi* by blowing through the kurum kuḻal. It is very

> difficult. For this, I had a special guru. (Swaminathan, August 2003, Koorara)

This account from a senior Malayan musician for whom the memory of feudal patronage is very much alive points to how capitalism and communism encouraged Malayan to conceptualize their hereditary right to provide ritual services as labour even prior to the professionalization of their ritual practices as a performing art form. It is only recently that new patronage opportunities created through tourism and performing arts venues as well as occupational associations have given rise to new possibilities for imagining musical subjectivity as more explicitly situated in capitalist productive arrangements. Yet, the concept of musical practice as productive labour precedes these developments. Clearly the example from Kerala demonstrates that the stages described in studies of the capitalization of music in Western modernity (Attali 1987; Olmsted 2002) do not unfold in a universal evolutionary sequence set out by Enlightenment ideals of progress akin to Chakrabarty's Type 1 history, but rather emerge from historical differences, distinctive ideological entanglements, and local social realities.

In this case, communist ideologies penetrated feudal productive relations through the grassroots political actions of the Communist Party of India. This became the primary filter for engaging with a capitalist worldview and thus labour as musical activity was established prior to any commercial sense of music as a commodity with potential for exchange value. By balancing Postone's attempt to historicize Marx's critique with Chakrabarty's use of Marx to recover historical difference, we can approach musical labour anytime, anywhere, as a particular constellation of locally conditioned positionings and agencies resulting from capitalist and non-capitalist interactions, the complexity of which is inaccessible from the standpoint of the transhistorical category of labour or the teleological obliteration of difference. Having established the theoretical and empirical basis for using labour as an investigative lens for exploring social mobility, it seems appropriate to turn to music and examine the second question introduced above concerning what makes musicians' labour process unique.

Political Economies of Musical Production

As Indian performing communities acquire more self-conscious awareness of the range of values associated with their artistic assets in Post-Independence India, investigating the labour of musicians in a modern South Asian context gains more critical momentum. This expanding sense of value is especially prominent in Kerala where a stronger, more enterprising sense of self-worth has penetrated ritual arts in the wake of widespread circulation of communist ideologies beginning in the early stages of the transition from colonial rule to Independence. The fact that a Marxist concept of labour associated with hereditary occupations entered the Malayalam modern lexicon and world view decades ahead of the neo-liberalizing measures adopted by the central government in early 90s, proves that more than other Marxist categories, labour permeates Indian encounters with and development of modern institutions rooted in European Enlightenment ideas and colonial expansion. Moreover, it offers an effective springboard for exploring the potential for human agency in a given musical productive arrangement. These are the reasons why I concentrate on labour rather than value, commodity, money or capital, to be the conceptual anchor for exploring the topic of music and social mobility from a Marxist standpoint.

However, use of the concept of labour following Postone's reinterpretation of Marx implies it should only serve as a heuristic category in regions where the socio-political background has been thoroughly entangled with modern institutions created by the intermingling of capitalist and non-capitalist ideologies. In other words, it is essential to ensure that analytical categories have a minimal grounding in consultants' conceptual frameworks, and therefore, the modern use of the term labour should not be applied to situations where it does not already exist as a popular concept. Although a lack of local currency would not necessarily preclude use of the concept—since one of the advantages of focusing on labour is that it directs the investigative lens onto what people do rather than on abstract categories alienated from the practice of formulating subjectivities—if we are to avoid applying totalizing Marxist perspectives there must be an insider concept of labour among consultants in the field before it can be legitimately employed as a heuristic. Even a cursory understanding of labour as a capitalist form of social mediation is sufficient to support using the concept to uncover the range of categories that people employ to express what they do musically in exchange for non-musical forms of reciprocity, including forms of payment, gifts, or rights.

Problematizing labour leads to exploring the scope of agency and social relations that expand or constrain individual and group potential for creating new subjectivities within the contours of alternative modernities. It also confronts the power relations of production that structure music making in a given locale. The potential for uncovering social conditions constraining musicians' agency is perhaps the most important reason for mobilizing the critical thrust of Marx's critique of labour in capitalism(s). But how can music be understood as socially-mediated by labour? What does musical labour consist of? What distinguishes between music as labour and music for other purposes? In search of answers I turn to insights from Attali's important study of the political economy of music and other recent approaches to music as productive activity.

In *Capital* Marx starts from the premise that all productivity under capitalism is based on matter and control over how it is transformed, exchanged, or consumed in the process of generating surplus value ([1867] 1976). People work with raw materials to produce tangible and useful products and in the process generate more value (surplus) than they need for their own reproduction. An exploitative class of non-producers realizes the surplus value or profits by alienating producers from their products and each other by a form of mystification propagated through the commodity-form, the un-paid labour for which, is the basis for appropriating a surplus value required to create more capital (wealth). This part of Marx's critique is primarily concentrated on products comprising some combination of matter, but what of products made of "immatter" and the labour required for their realization and valorization?

Is the labour that produces immaterial goods or services unproductive? Referring to Marx's example of the piano maker and player, many scholars argue that Marx did not recognize intangible products as productive labour, pointing to a note in the *Grundrisse* that uses the example of the productive labour of an instrument maker in contrast with the unproductive labour of the musician who plays the instrument (Marx [1857-58] 305-306n; Qureshi 2002:88-9; Gramit 2002:6). As a result, much Marxist-oriented research in music scholarship has centred on the commodification of music in the form of tangible recording products (Manuel 1993). However, in a subsequent economic manuscript Marx clearly suggests that musicians' labour can be productive when he uses the example of a singer who makes money for someone else by singing:

> A singer who sings like a bird is an unproductive worker. If she sells her singing for money, she is to that extent a wage labourer or a commodity dealer. But the same singer, engaged by an entrepreneur who has her sing to make money, is a productive worker, for she directly produces capital. ([1861-64] 1994:448)

The distinction is one between singing that creates a use value and singing that generates surplus value for someone who facilitates a use value for someone else by hiring a singer. The evolution of Marx's thinking about the productivity of music reinforces Postone's argument, which would historicize the example of the piano maker and player in the second industrial revolution (1848-WWI) at a time of large-scale industrial expansion. Quite understandably, Marx would have been more predisposed to focus on how tangible products (as opposed to services) enter into circulation and in the process generate surplus value for a capitalist class at the expense of exploited factory labourers.

Approaching *Capital* obliquely as opposed to literally, there is more evidence that suggests Marx's categories accommodate the possibility of intangible products being productive. For example, according to Marx, in order for labour to be productive it must produce a surplus value in the process of satisfying a need for someone. Surrounded by the misery of factory life in London, Marx logically viewed the product of labour primarily in a congealed form as a tangible object. Using the example of a coat, he expands:

> Human labour-power in motion, or human labour, creates value, but is not itself value. It becomes value only in its congealed state, when embodied in the form of some object. In order to express the value of the linen as a congelation of human labour, that value must be expressed as having objective existence, as being a something materially different from the linen itself, and yet a something common to the linen and all other commodities. ([1867] 1995:26)

In this discussion of commodities, Marx elaborates on the difference between a commodity with relative value, in this case the yarn (which is being expressed by another commodity), and the equivalent commodity in which the value is expressed, the coat. The basis for the coat's use value is the warmth it provides. From this example we can imagine that Marx viewed music primarily as the basis of an instrument's use value and therefore not a commodity on its own – the equivalent commodity being the tangible object used to produce music containing both relative commodities like wood and animal skins in the case of Malayan drums. But what if we consider the drum to be a relative commodity and the music it produces as the equivalent commodity. The sounds produced would indeed be materially different from the drum as Marx indicates is necessary in order to realize the value of the relative commodity. In this case, the basis of the use value of music as an equivalent commodity would be the effect it has on people's sentient capabilities in the form of physical and meaningful responses to sound. Going further, from this perspective, the sound product is arguably never really immaterial, even if it is invisible, since it interacts with human perception through sound waves that physically stimulate the inner ear, and therefore engages a sense of hearing that is fundamentally tactile (Schafer 1980).

In sum, Marx's theory does not preclude the possibility of labouring to produce an intangible[35] commodity, particularly when taken in the context of a third industrial revolution beginning in post-1968 to the present (Negri 1996:162). Indeed, this is the basis of recent attempts to defend Marx against a wave of poststructuralist assaults on Marxist scholarship for having privileged totalizing and Eurocentric interpretations of his theories. For example, Antonio Negri asserts that the new historical phase of capitalism does not depend on producing tangible products, but rather intangible products through communication networks instead of transportation networks, which was the case during the mid-to-late nineteenth century. Like Postone, Negri does not follow unilinear interpretations of Marx's theory, and thereby recognizes that with every new phase of capitalism there are new possibilities for resistance in encounters with historical difference.

What is interesting here is that the possibility of production based on intangible products as a definitive factor in the current phase of capitalism has only recently been recognized. Yet music and other performing arts have been producing intangible products in a capitalist mode since the rise of bourgeois patronage and the establishment of venues where an abstract universal measure of spatial and temporal boundaries could be applied and musicians could be separated (figuratively speaking) from the product of their labour. This is the moment when the musical work-concept framed by genre appears (Goehr 1992): the moment when musicians cease to produce music, and begin producing signs, as Attali puts it. So it is ironic that Baudrillard's critique of the political economy of the sign flows from the idea that the current phase of late-capitalism is driven by consumption of intangible signs in communication networks (1972), when in fact this has been going on since musicians began working in venues organized according to early capitalist productive relations.

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[35] Considering the point of view that sound transmission is tactile it seems more accurate to substitute "invisible" in place of "intangible" music commodities; sound is always embodied physically at some level, which suggests it is fundamentally tangible, though not seeable.

In his research on the political economy of music, Attali raises many critical questions about the material and symbolic domains in which musicians exchange their services to earn a living (1977). First appearing in an English translation in 1986 at the same time as the postmodern explosion of cultural theory in the wake of French poststructuralism, *Noise* did not make much of an impact in music scholarship. At the time, music scholarship was more concerned with theorizing identity politics and decentring Western canons and therefore was hardly receptive to yet another attempt to write the history of music using a Western, teleological grand narrative. To be sure, Attali makes no effort to historicize his theory as specifically European in its bias and thus proceeds to unapologetically fall into an ethnocentric framework in the process of building his argument that music (universally) reflects and predicts changes in political economy. For instance, his idea that the development of harmony in Western music announced changes in the future of political economy towards capitalist hegemonic practices is hardly tenable. Especially when we consider that capitalism has had long interpenetrating relations with political economies in many places, including the Indian Subcontinent, where musical practices do not give prominence to harmony in their creative process.

Notwithstanding the unsustainable assertions of his theory, Attali provides some key concepts for engaging with musical practices as labour in different socio-historical contexts and ethnographic domains by not only approaching musical production as creation, but also as interpretation. Obviously, dichotomizing production and interpretation presents a problem in South Asian musical frames of reference and others where creation and interpretation are inseparable, but it is worthwhile to bear with the distinction for the purposes of highlighting what I sense is the crux of Attali's contribution: namely, he interrogates the social and productive process of musical labour, which opens possibilities for considering how musicians use their assets to become more mobile in society.

From the above discussions it should be clear that, contrary to literal interpretations of Marx, I insist it is possible to conceive of live musical labour as having exchange value. According to Attali, this occurs when musicians receive a salary or wage from an event promoter, manager, or owner in exchange for performances that are spatially enclosed in a venue to which access is regulated by fees (Attali 1977; Olmsted 2002). Music is no longer an exchange of use values in this situation because the product, the spectacle, gains autonomous status independent of the musicians even though they are physically present; this autonomy is the precondition for music to acquire exchange value (ibid.:77-8). In fact, the two conditions appear to be interdependent: you do not have autonomous status without music acquiring exchange value and vice versa. Further, Attali's idea of autonomy also implies disembodiment whereby the musicians no longer sells himself as an embodied use value, but rather sells his time, which calls to mind occasions where Malayan perform the ritual teyyam in a theatrical context.[36] Postone elaborates on this temporal transformation when he explains the difference between concrete and abstract time, the former being a dependent variable determined by the events unfolding in social life as people work against the backdrop of agrarian lifestyles regulated by cyclical seasons. Abstract time, by contrast, is a non-qualitative independent variable that determines events in social life. The difference is one between "labour as a measure of time and time measuring labour"(Postone 1994:216).

Under capitalism, musicians no longer sell concrete labour in the form of their embodied productive and creative potential, but rather they begin selling abstract labour determined by abstract time, which suggests that the sound product is figuratively disembodied. Accordingly, Attali and Postone confirm that musicians cannot sell musical selves and still produce exchange value; rather, to generate exchange value they sell musical time in exchange for wages. The implications of this Marxian perspective are immediately recognizable in cultural theory that explores the intersection of embodiment, performance, and capitalism. For example, Jane Desmond's research on the prominence of spectacles or cultural shows in the Hawaiian tourism industry is one case in point (1999). Her argument insists that bodies on display constitute the product purchased by tourists, whereas from Attali's perspective it is the temporal and spatial frame that constitutes the product as spectacle in a capitalist productive arrangement, even if musicians remain physically present in the process of labouring to produce the product.

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[36] See Aubert for a description of this transformation from the perspective of an events manager (2001).

The second point I seize upon in Attali's work is his assertion that in the same moment that live music acquires exchange value, musicians cease producing music and begin producing signs, or at least they produce both. This argument is critical for developing a critique of the codification of genre, since genres emerge in Europe at the same time as musical labour acquires exchange value, autonomous status, and musicians become artists. As Attali puts it cogently: "L'artiste naît, en mème temps que son travail est mis en vente" (1977:95). A theory of musical mobility depends on this reflexive critique of genre in music scholarship and Attali's affirmation that live music acquires exchange value, followed by autonomy as an art form, which enables the production of capital in the form of signs rather than music as a use value. Attali notes how genre terms become more distinctive and acquire wider currency at the end of the eighteenth century with the establishment of the *café-concerts* and *cabarets*, in other words spatially segregated venues where abstract time can be used to measure the duration of a spectacle and serve as the basis for charging fees. Recognizing how signs and what they accomplish come to acquire more importance than the musical function is key to understanding the impact of recontextualizing musical practices in modern entertainment venues and new possibilities for using musical assets to pursue higher social status.

Anthony Olmsted's study on the capitalization of music in London explores the same transformation occurring much earlier when the English bourgeoisie began paying for concerts held at closed venues featuring representations of specific genres by known artists according to pre-determined schedules and durations (2002). Olmsted traces the origins of the public concert to late-seventeenth-century London as naturally progressing from the earlier practice of charging money for plays presented in public theatres (ibid.:112). Drawing from Marx's concept of mode of production, he highlights the variety of new venues that appeared during the transformation from feudal to capitalist productive relations as the pivotal condition enabling appropriation of surplus value from the products of musical labour. Consistent with Attali's viewpoint and Bourdieu's consumer-based theory of cultural capital (1979:13), Olmsted also recognizes that the new product is largely symbolic rather than musical since it is intimately bound up with status consumption as opposed to feudal responsibilities, declaring that "public concerts could offer a commodity for the middle classes to consume as a public entertainment that provided them with the necessary amount of social acknowledgement of their status" (2002:113).[37]

Such venues in which musicians produce signs in addition to music in exchange for wages for an audience that pays for a preconceived expectation for a particular kind of experience are ironically called "traditional venues" by cultural economists, Kushner and Brooks. Contrasting enclosed "traditional" venues with "non-traditional" sites where performances including busking occur, they balance productive and consumer perspectives in their analysis of the pros and cons of both settings. In the process they describe how the emergence of a traditional venue for patronage depended on circulating information about an event prior to its taking place and thus new categories were needed to communicate with the market—categories that provided potential customers with a frame of reference. Attali eloquently summarizes this relationship between producers, signs, and consumers:

> In representation, the musician no longer sold his body. He ceased to be a domestic, becoming an entrepreneur of a particular kind who received a remuneration from the sale of his labor. The musician's economic status and political relation with power changed in the course of the great political upheaval of the time, as did the aesthetic codes and forms in which the new audience wished to see itself reflected. ([1977] 1985:57)

In order to recognize their relationship to the product in a traditional or capitalist venue, audience members began cultivating a new aesthetic based on discrete categories of sound idioms called genres. Kushner and Brooks use the example of the symphony and thus join Olmsted and Attali in underscoring why genre is inextricably linked to the capitalization of musical production (2000:68). Moreover, Lydia Goehr's incisive observations concerning the musical work-concept must be viewed in the context of changing productive relations and the rise of venues that facilitated surplus appropriation by non-producing agencies of the exchange value generated by performers. The corollary of this development was the emergence of a musical genre-concept.

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[37] For another perspective on the production of signs as opposed to music, see also Johnson's important account of the decline of feudal obligation and position as a determinate of social standing with the rise of status consumption among the Bourgeoisie in Paris (1995).

The above examples from literature on the political economy of music concentrate on capitalist relations of musical production in Euro-American contexts. Using labour as a concept for explaining the formation of musical subjectivities in non-Western contexts, however, requires considerable translation and adaptation. Regula Qureshi's Marxist-oriented research on North Indian musicians from hereditary feudal lineages has opened up possibilities for situating musical labour outside Marx's industrial Europe (2000, 2003). Using mode of production theory to interrogate the social basis of Hindustani music, her contribution is significant here for two reasons: first, based on ethnographic and historical sources, her discussion of productive conditions that are unique to performing artists complements Attali's political economy of music by demonstrating how distinctive ways of rendering musical service coincide with equally distinctive forms of mediating social relations and exchanges; secondly, her use of Marxist concepts to interrogate social relations of production provides a musical response to Chakrabarty's call for accounts of historical difference that do not reject the European Enlightenment categories of modernity.

Qureshi sets out to explore the extent to which musicians trained in elite classical musical practices, theories, and idioms of North India owe their artistic capabilities to a system of patronage characterized by distinctive productive relations regulated by unconditional service to landowning families supported by ideologies and power structures specific to Indian feudalism. The crux of her argument is that a mode of production lens encourages us to problematize limitations and opportunities for agency facing musicians that perform live music in socio-economic arrangements. By confronting power through an investigative framework centred on performance arenas and life histories, she demonstrates how North Indian classical music patronage is based on inherently unequal relations between producers and appropriators operating according to deeply embedded patterns of domination and dependence. Her study elucidates the complex ambivalence that characterizes classical music patronage among hereditary professional music lineages. Although Indian feudal relations established fertile social conditions for cultivating extraordinary artistry through provision of subsistence to dependent musician families in exchange for live musical service, they also institutionalized an exploitative system that placed enormous restrictions on the mobility and identities of performers. She demonstrates how a Marxist analysis of Hindustani musical production explains in compelling terms the deeply rooted dependence on inequitable relations in feudal artistic patronage. Echoing Prakash's critique of colonial emancipatory discourses of "freedom" as the corollary of capitalist productive arrangements (1990), Qureshi evokes the ambivalence and caution Indian classical musicians have displayed towards the so-called "freedom" of wage labour instituted by Indian or non-Indian capitalist relations of musical production.

To support her claim that North Indian classical musicians operate under a distinctive productive arrangement, Qureshi explains what makes musical means of production different from other creative production. Contrasting musicians with other feudal servants like cooks and visual artists whose products are easily separated for consumption from their producers, she notes that musicians are inseparable from the temporal and spatial context in which their performance is consumed. Regarding feudal patronage, she notes that "… production required being in the presence of their patron" (93). Unlike other arts, the physical venue and social occasion constituted a key element of the means of production for which musicians depended on feudal landowning families to gain access to. Accordingly, the inalienable presence of the musician in the spatial means of musical production was a unique condition that created an interactive performing arena for realizing artistic value under Indian feudalism.

But unlike capitalist venues of musical production discussed earlier, the exchange between producer and consumer/appropriator is unmediated. Under a feudal mode of production, musicians produce music as a simple commodity in exchange for protection and subsistence—a form of service bearing only use value and thus unrestricted by predetermined temporal wage structures and market demands associated with the capitalization of performing arts. In contrast with public concerts for which audiences purchase pre-conceived expectations for predictable semiotic experiences from entrepreneurial middle-agents who control the venue, Indian feudal patrons actively engaged in a creative process that was highly exclusive, interactive and improvisatory. In addition to creating a condition for producing unpredictable musical outcomes—famously exhibited by oral accounts of celebrated duels in which musicians competed on behalf of their patrons—feudal-based musical patronage depended on musicians being granted access to the highest echelons of Indian society through their presence at interactive performance occasions. While clearly an advantage during times of relative stability and prosperity under feudal regimes, this heightened visibility and status when compared with other artistic producers has also worked against hereditary musicians in Post-Independent India. The impact of land reforms and cultural nationalism, as influenced by European perspectives on the relationship between performing arts and India's modern public sphere, has eroded the security provided by feudal productive arrangements.[38]

Yet rather than view the decline of feudal patronage as devaluing the status of hereditary musicians in the wake of the capitalization of Indian classical music, Qureshi asserts that the current situation for hereditary professional musicians suggests a far more complex intermingling of feudal and capitalist social mediations. To support her view she points to how some individual musicians from hereditary lineages have achieved phenomenal success in world music markets (2002:96, 2004, in print). The site of interaction (or articulation) between what Qureshi frames as modes of production, feudal and capitalist, is where I see potential to build and modify her concept of labour to address questions of agency in the Malayan community and the more fundamental issues of musical productivity and exploitation.

It seems useful at this point to recap Postone's contention, that Marx's powerful critique of labour is inherently limited to its historically specific association with industrialization and Western modernity. He argues that the conceptual apparatus that Marx developed, including the category of labour, would be inapplicable to tangible or intangible productive activity outside a capitalist sphere of influence. Unless, however, we assume the universality of such concepts, as indeed, most Marxist-oriented scholarship has presumed in the process of building Eurocentric critiques of class struggles from the standpoint of labour. For the purposes of this chapter, I have rejected the conventional and widely refuted ethnocentric use of Marx, suggesting instead that it would be more productive to accept the limitations of Marxist concepts thoroughly outlined by Postone, and thereby effectively respond to Chakrabarty's challenge to rethink historical difference as constitutive of capitalism (2000:70). Only in this way does it appear tenable to use Marx as an analytical tool for describing the socio-economic and political conditions musicians work within to exchange performance for means of subsistence.

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[38] This is particularly true for the hereditary professional women performers or courtesans that enjoyed a higher status and position in society prior to the gradual destabilizing and demise of feudal socio-political structures under British colonialism and Indian Nationalism respectively (see Post 1987; Maciszewsky 2001; Qureshi 2001).

Returning to the subject of musicians in South Asia, the implications of this premise for Qureshi's Marxist approach are significant. Focussing on labour as a historically-specific possibility resulting from capitalist interpenetrations with non-capitalist productive arrangements precludes the notion that Hindustani music can be viewed through an exclusively feudal mode of production lens. Adapting Postone's interpretation of Marx's concept of labour, I problematize musical performance materially as embodied in hybrid productive arrangements partially shaped by capitalist elements. As a result, the question, "Is Hindustani music feudal?," becomes less rhetorically framed: To what extent is Hindustani music feudal and to what extent is it capitalist? Thus I follow Qureshi's focus on labour in her theoretical approach to musical production in India, but I qualify my take on her theory by insisting that the strength of the concept lies in its ability to emphasize the hybridity and flexibility that characterizes capitalist and non-capitalist intermingling in contemporary Indian musical modes of production.

Even as Indian feudal practices and relations continue to nourish classical music in India, musicians are also increasingly encouraged to take advantage of new opportunities for patronage through national arts and cultural institutions, modern performance venues as well as international free markets, both of which depend on a capitalist mode of production. The resulting hybrid productive arrangements expand the horizon of possibilities for formulating musical selves, which underlines how particular kinds of social relations mediated through labour influence the condensation of musical subjectivities. To illustrate how the position above relates to the dynamic linkages between identity, musical labour, and mobility that I witnessed in Kerala, I turn to the ethnographic evidence gathered through interviews with a professional Malayan musician who more than any other consultant succeeded in bridging contrasting socio-economic relations of production. A more detailed discussion of M.T. Manoharan's case study is featured in chapter 5, however, it is relevant to briefly discuss how he described the payment he received for performance at different types of venues.

At the local shrines where he holds the customary hereditary right and duty (*avakāśam*) to provide music for teyyam during the festival season, the payment he receives from the temple committee (a position formerly held by aristocratic landowning families) is referred to as *dakṣiṇa*. The term more accurately translates as a gift or token of recognition and renewal of the bond between the musicians and the custodians of the temple. As an enduring symbol of feudal authority and responsibility, this form of remuneration contrasts markedly with the word used to describe musical work outside of the feudal hereditary boundaries. When playing at weddings in temples or as an extra in at other teyyam events within the hereditary territory of other Malayan families, he refers to the payment as a form of *kūli*, which is the equivalent of a small wage given for a one-time job determined on the basis of duration and job completion rather than hereditary obligations. Finally, when offered a chance to perform teyyam in other states of India or abroad with a travelling troupe, Manoharan described the remuneration as *śambaḷam*, which is the equivalent of the English word "salary" in Malayalam and thus refers to a longer period of work with explicitly modern connotations in which a written contract may be involved with clear stipulations of the total amount to be paid at the end of the period during which the performances take place (Williams [1958] 1993:xvii). For instance, this was the word used by Manoharan to describe the money he was paid following a European tour with a Kerala performing arts troupe in spring, 2002.

What these terms associated with different productive venues suggest is that Manoharan's identity as a musician includes both a feudal ideology of hereditary service and modern capitalist concepts of artistic labour. Moreover, his growing entrepreneurial capability to enter into new productive arrangements based on his awareness of hereditary assets as labour skills is nonetheless dependent on maintaining the link with the feudal context that created the conditions for cultivating the skills that are now in demand, just as the hereditary classical musicians featured in Qureshi's work remain committed to the hereditary lineages or brotherhoods that keep the knowledge alive within the community. Manoharan's role in feudal relations of production is also boosted by his reputation as a an artist with experience performing in capitalist venues, which has improved his social status in his hereditary context without eroding a sense of obligation towards his ancestors, feudal patrons, and the spirits he maintains close contact with.

Manoharan's dialectic between musical labour and his identity as a musician is an example of the kind of living historical difference that Chakrabarty and the subaltern studies project might describe as breaching the grand narratives of Western capitalist expansion (2002). His work history as a performer demonstrates how a dynamic concept of artistic labour can coexist with enduring practices of feudal service in Kerala's alternative modernity. Far from the teleological vision of capitalism subsuming non-capitalist social and economic organization, Manoharan's case study exhibits a strategic form of complementarity that, though hardly apolitical, nonetheless points to the inaccuracy of reducing hybrid and even contradictory aspects of musical identities to mutually exclusive categories. The qualities discussed above that set music apart from other arts as productive labour, combined with the interdependent coexistence between identity and modern artistic labour, are precisely the conditions that enable a specifically musical potential for mobility, which is accessible through the dialectic of musical labour and the condensation of identity that it helps to shape. The distinctive qualities of musical production are what lead to the possibility of using it to achieve mobility, from the perspective of both producers like Manoharan and the hereditary artists Qureshi highlights, and from that of consumers/patrons.

What is the potential for producers of music to improve their status? How does individual and familial mobility constitute one possibility that may or may not emerge in the aftermath of capitalism's fluid entanglement with non-capitalist historical difference? To expand on how labour and identities acquire values, a precondition for mobility, and to move towards a theory of musical mobility, I discuss the work of two influential figures in the discourse on social mobility.

C. Social Mobility: Complementary Viewpoints

Reaching for Bourdieu

Few works have had as profound an impact on the field of social mobility research as Pierre Bourdieu's *La distinction*, a study of correlations between consumer practices and socio-economic status in France during the 1970s ([1979] Eng. ed. 1984). The work highlights the limitations and opportunities individual agents gain as a result of inheriting or accumulating different forms of capital, including economic, social, educational, and cultural capital. By analyzing the relationship between positions in society and consumer lifestyles, Bourdieu makes a persuasive case for explaining how a combination of quantity and quality of capital determines social standings, and by extension, class affiliations. His relational approach is primarily aimed at demonstrating how class distinctions and their inherent structural inequalities are reproduced by individual agents. Education is given more weight than other forms of capital in his scheme, yet he acknowledges how opportunities in education are often contingent on the cultural capital one inherits by virtue of proximity to positions having more and higher valued capital (1984:132-33). One's total possession of capital, then, determines one's potential to dominate through accessing forms of power in the struggle to control economic and cultural resources through symbolic violence, meaning the process by which dominant cultural values become misrecognized for society's values (1984:387).

The spatial dimension is important in Bourdieu's conception of a field of power relations, with distance between social positions forming the relational basis on which individuals learn to communicate a lifestyle that serves to reinforce belonging in a particular class milieu with unequal access to forms of power. In his words: *"...l'espace social prédispose au rapprochement : les gens inscrits dans un secteur restreint de l'espace seront à la fois plus proches... et plus enclins à se rapprocher; plus faciles aussi à rapprocher, à mobiliser*" (1994:26). To explain how individual actions inform social positioning within this space, he draws on the concept of the *habitus*, a unifying and generative set of differentiated and differentiating dispositions that consolidates and informs lifestyle choices that also signify class affiliations. Although his theory offers a convincing paradigm for investigating the dynamic interplay between individual action and social structures, mainly by way of concepts including symbolic capital, the habitus, and the social field of position-taking, Bourdieu's concern with demystifying the reproduction of dominant and subdominant groups in society restricts the scope for individual agency and by extension, social mobility.

Responding to criticism that his model is essentialist (*substantialist*) in a recent reformulation of his theory (1994), Bourdieu argues that since his approach is fundamentally relational it could not possibly be interpreted as attaching fixed static attributes to class groups. In his view, the idea of class is itself a theoretical construct whose realization requires a political act directed at mobilizing individuals who are close to one another in social space and share a similar habitus. Classes, he maintains, exist in a virtual state, never fully realized yet consistently suggested in the social field of differences or distinction. Further defending his model, he argues that to deny the power of this virtual state is tantamount to denying the existence of differences (ibid.:28).

While his critics may have exaggerated the extent to which his model can be compared to traditional readings of Marx's analysis of class struggle (in which clear divisions between productive and non-productive classes are viewed as the precondition for the realization of communism), Bourdieu does appear to give more weight to the directive and regulative power of the habitus than he does to individual choice. In doing so he presents an analysis of society that is more determined and rigid than arguably evidenced in daily practice. Publicly expressed differences, in his view, imply structural inequalities and given that these divisions separate individual agents that coalesce around similar access to capital and power reflected by their proximity to each other in the social field, clearly he remains committed to class as a social category at least on a Weberian level of an ideal-type. Consequently, the field of possibilities is actually fraught with structural constraints that leave options for mobility at a bare minimum, prompting him to conclude that where one would expect to see mobility, we often see reproduction and preservation of the dominant social order (ibid.:28): in other words, immobility. Why does his model end on such a pessimistic note?

Two issues concerning Bourdieu's approach to social mobility require some discussion before I demonstrate the advantages of merging key insights with Nan Lin's theory of social capital and how this relates to music. First, evidence of social action gathered to support his argument is almost entirely based on consumer practices, whereas aspects of production are treated as permanent, passive and descriptive features of identification. In the schematic diagram of his model in *La distinction* (1979:140-1), either you are a manual labourer, a health care professional, a teacher, or you are not; one's occupation determines the consumer choices one is more predisposed to make. Clearly there is a strong pattern of correlations between occupational fields and positions within the social field that more often than not serve to reproduce certain predispositions simply because people working in similar jobs tend to find partners in the same network of positions they themselves occupy. But what is less clear is the reality that some individuals do manage to change their occupation, which then acts as a catalyst for accumulating more capital and taking a higher position in society. The exception exposes a weakness in Bourdieu's model: only consumption appears as a function of personal choice and agency within the habitus' generative framework.

Consequently, social status appears as largely contingent on acts of consumption as opposed to both acts of consumption and production, thereby treating productive labour activities as passive identity markers that embody a certain volume and quality of symbolic capital. According to Bourdieu's model, the true motor for making distinctions that serve to recreate the social order is the habitus for pursuing a particular consumer lifestyle. Mobility in this scheme, then, is only realizable through changes in consumer practices, which are constrained both culturally and economically for the most part by our productive lot in life, whether we are born into a family of doctors, teachers, or factory workers.

That being said, given his extensive work on canonization in artistic fields, one can hardly accuse Bourdieu of not exploring how production-oriented practices contribute to the promotion or demotion (*déclassement*) of social status within a limiting field of shifting power relations. In his important study of the formation of the French literary canon in the late 1800s (1992) he demonstrates how some creative labour has the potential to accumulate substantial economic capital but relatively low cultural capital, while other artistic products and services can have the reverse effect: low profits with high status. However, Bourdieu's cultural production model and his whole canonization theory is contingent on the existence of well-defined categories of artistic experience that mirror Goehr's musical-work concept (1992): namely genres, enmeshed in a web of regulative power relations that determine the emergent position of an artistic work. As Attali and Olmsted's research on the political economy of music demonstrates, construction of autonomous music genres paralleled the separation of musicians from their artistic products at the same moment as they became wage labourers and producers of exchange value. Considering the alienating consequence for labour under capitalism, it is understandable that producers are conspicuous by their absence in Bourdieu's schematic representation of the field of cultural production. His work mirrors the capitalist condition of alienation even as productive art serves as the basis for his exploration of the mechanism by which cultural capital is created, protected, mobilized, or reproduced. Yet interestingly, in his study of French consumer society, producers are at least included in the schema even if they are treated as static boundary markers rather than as dynamic agencies (1984:340).

In the process of problematizing social mobility through the prism of labour and social identity, why not synthesize these two powerful models—one consumptive and one productive—to develop a way of explaining how individual agents interact with the field of possibilities within structural constraints and power relations to try and improve their social standing?

The second criticism of Bourdieu's approach follows from the absence of production-based evidence in *La distinction* and producers in *Les règles de l'art* and concerns a common assumption about social mobility mentioned at the beginning of this chapter. The spatial figurative meaning of mobility, upward or downward, involving a directional displacement beginning from one discrete point and ending at another is more pervasive than is commonly acknowledged and this is reflected by the prominence Bourdieu gives to spatial dimensions. From his point of view, the trajectory towards improved social status appears as unilinear in the sense that one moves from one position to another, rather than as multilinear. Further, the linear spatial image suggests that the destination point is conceptualised as a discrete level in the social hierarchy and thus it is implicitly assumed that one can only occupy one level at a time, which precludes a conception of social mobility as processual with access to multiple levels. The implications of the popular metaphor of a social ladder and the weight given to spatial distinctions in Bourdieu's work forms the basis of my critique of their underlying premises.

Alternatively, if we emphasize production and follow what people actually do in their working lives, we find that social mobility is a multi-directional, multi-layered movement in which individual agents maintain networks of relationships at different positions in the hierarchy and hence there is no beginning and end point that one can complete to achieve a higher standing in society. Rather there are only opportunities to expand or maintain a given volume and quality of capital, either through consumptive or productive actions. As shown in chapter five, this is particularly true for performing artists because they typically engage in more socially fluid productive arrangements that often bring them into contact more frequently with more diverse networks due to wide ranging demands for live performance.

But before we rejoin the topic of musical labour and value, it is fruitful to review Nan Lin's theory of social capital (2001). Though Lin takes exception to many of Bourdieu's assumptions and premises, rather than engage his theory in oppositional terms, it is more useful to consider how the two approaches to capital are complementary. Indeed, in my adaptation of Lin's use of social network terminology, I intend to show that he misses opportunities to incorporate some of Bourdieu's most important insights.

Nan Lin's Social Capital Theory

The basic premise of Lin's *Social Capital: A Theory of Social Structure and Action* (2001) is the idea that people invest in social relations with expectations for returns in a marketplace (ibid.:19). By returns he means any immaterial or material resource that is considered an asset in the process of attempting to maintain or improve one's socio-economic status. Contrary to Bourdieu's emphasis on how assets are collectively sustained by groups formed from individuals who are within close proximity to each other in the social field of consumption, Lin is more concerned with individual action and networks of social relations as the key to apprehending how assets are accumulated, maintained, or lost. Accordingly, his theory gives more prominence to social capital than it does to cultural, symbolic, and economic capital as the primary means for obtaining structurally embedded resources. Contrary to the view that uneven distribution is rigidly controlled by dominant class interests, he proceeds from the assumption that resources are essentially open to all. Hence, his perspective delivers a persuasive critique of class-based analyses like Bourdieu's for overstating the extent to which groups operate in closed networks (ibid.:28).

To establish the foundation for his theory, he sets out to demonstrate how resources acquire value in the first place, or in other words, what it is that individual agents aim to capture. The corollary of this is an explanation for why resources and the values they embody are unevenly distributed in society, and thus his main objective is to provide a method for investigating why some individuals gain more access to resources through interaction and social networks than others. After elucidating the principles regulating access to resources he then moves on to consider how they can be mobilized for gains, or what he labels "the process of activation" (ibid.:29).

A full description and summary of the conceptual apparatus he develops to address his theoretical goals is beyond the purpose of this chapter; instead, I concentrate on some terms he introduces that are useful for my approach to socio-musical mobility. These include his definition of resources, the homophily and heterophily principles regulating interaction in social networks, and the concept of social bridges. From a more critical standpoint, I conclude by contending that the analytical potential of Lin's theory is undermined by inadequate or incomplete explanations for how cultural capital, as distinct from social capital, influences individual agents' capability to access social networks and capture material and symbolic resources. To address this point, I propose that Bourdieu's commitment to critiquing power relations on the basis of intangible forms of capital could be productively combined with Lin's more flexible point of view on agency, labour, and social mobility.

As described in the above discussion of the political economy of live music performances, musicians produce use values and exchange values depending on the context and productive relations involved. In addition to possessing certain resources or assets, they access resources through social interaction to maintain their socio-economic situation by strengthening their identity as a producer of signs, or they invest their assets with the intention of increasing their resource base and thereby improving their options for positioning in society.[39] In Qureshi's mode of production terms, invoking the means of musical production, including the technological and artistic know-how and the instruments, is another way of saying that musicians start off with a certain quantity and quality of resources. Adding more texture to this debate, Lin makes a distinction between ascribed resources and acquired ones, the difference between those you are born with and those accumulated through external sources in the public sphere. Although Lin's distinction lacks precision, it is clear that both types of resources can be either material, as in assets such as wealth or an instrument inherited (ascribed or acquired), or immaterial in the case of ethnicity, social ties, a body of artistic knowledge and skills (ascribed), or an education diploma or trade certification (acquired). They can be either ephemeral, in the case of clothing, or more enduring as in one's gender or ethnicity. In short, elasticity and heterogeneity make his concept of resources capable of describing anything that individual actors can mobilize to their advantage to increase their access to more and better resources, which in the end determines their range of positionality in a dynamic hierarchy.

It is necessary to clarify that resources in Lin's theory are not synonymous with social capital, a term he uses only to describe resources that are invested in a marketplace with expectations for returns. For example, the resources one is born with or receives through early socialization in the family are relatively enduring pieces of one's identity. For example, ethnicity, gender, caste, lineage, and socio-economic status constitute (ascribed) resources which may be invested in social networks with the aim of capturing a return. In the context of Malabar in South India, the endogamous Malayan caste affiliation and the carefully guarded body of hereditary ritual and artistic knowledge transmitted to successive generations through patrilineal and matrilineal lines of descent would be an example of a body of ascribed resources which could become social capital if mobilized to maintain or capture resources.

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[39] Here I prefer to invoke the idea of a range of positionings rather than the image of fixed points that Lin subscribes in order to connote a more dynamic system than the baggage of structuralism will allow.

Acquired resources, by contrast, are only accessible through wider networks of social relationships and thus are more easily identifiable as a potential form of social capital. That is, they are more visible through social interaction in the marketplace as in the kind of information that might be listed on a resume for instance. Moreover, although acquired resources are obtained variously from extended family, education institutions, and work settings, as was consistently demonstrated by the Malayan, they do not become capital until they are invested through social interaction, as when a resume reaches a potential employer, for example, or when a Malayan musician uses an institutional music certification to attract patronage from high status music students. Social capital, then, can only be captured through investment of ascribed or previously acquired resources.

One of the weaknesses of Lin's approach, however, is his failure to adequately define the difference between social and cultural capital, which at first glance appears to mirror his definition of acquired and ascribed resources. In a discussion on the nature of resources he makes it clear that all resources constitute potential social capital: "When resources are being invested for expected returns in the marketplace, they become social capital" (2001:55). The meaning of resources, he contends, and hence the source of value, is inherently social and established by persuasion, petition, and coercion (ibid.30); or put another way, value is constituted by effective communication, peer pressure, or threat of consequences for non-recognition. Power relations explicitly shape the valorization of resources and so the value system must be inevitably determined by a disproportionate number of individuals with higher resource quality and quantity. Relatively speaking, a higher resource agent facilitates access to wider and more diverse social networks and the capacity to influence signification and value.

However, as Bourdieu demonstrates, cultural capital—whether created from ascribed or acquired resources—is intimately linked to power and thus determines value of and access to resources. And yet Lin collapses Bourdieu's cultural capital into the more general category of social capital and in doing so fails to grasp how some forms of ascribed enduring resources, for example a privileged domain of familial knowledge or a linguistic dialect (speech community), can in fact be only accessible to members who share the same assets or identity. By allowing social capital to subsume all other forms of capital, Lin underestimates the insular effects of some forms of cultural capital that may exclude individual agents with higher resource profiles on the basis of simply not being in possession of a particular kind of ascribed asset or cultural capital.

This oversight raises important issues concerning how power relations are problematized in Lin's theory, suggesting that he may be overly optimistic as to the ease with which individuals can invest using resources akin to Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital.[40] In the case of musical production, this point is significant because it supports the proposition that musicians have an advantage over other hereditary professions due to their inseparable presence in the embodied product that they facilitate. Performance as a service product enables access to more diverse, disproportionately powerful, social networks, or what Lin refers to as opportunities for *heterophilous* interaction (ibid.:48). At the same time, as musicians seek inclusion (via the cultural capital that is their art and bread and butter) to wider social milieus they maintain the exclusivity of their knowledge by guarding it fiercely from potential competitors (Qureshi 2002:95). Therefore, cultural capital, as a distinct form of currency that can be inherited or captured, is given special prominence in artistic fields, and moreover, it is transferable to other domains in the public sphere where it facilitates access to resources disproportionate to the status of artistic agents.

One example concerns places where political capital is regarded with particularly high esteem, as in Lin's research in China or my work in Kerala. In both contexts, being in possession of certain forms of cultural resources can facilitate access to social contacts who open opportunities for gaining valuable political resources that might eventually provide returns when invested as social capital. This is exactly what occurs in the stories of political singing for the Communist Party of India (Marxist) told by K.P.C. Panikkar's family in chapter five. Keeping in mind this problematic aspect of Lin's theory, I consider how he describes resources are invested as a form of social capital following different strategies of action that result in different types of returns.

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[40] The fact that he locates power as a distinct political category of capital rather than as a pervasive analytical object relevant to every category, including the other two he designates wealth and reputation (ibid.:62), further suggests that his theory lacks Bourdieu's penetrating critique of power.

According to Lin, individual agents invest resources in the form of social capital through two modes of interaction: expressive and instrumental. Each mode reflects a different expectation for returns and degree of effort. A social actor's position in the hierarchy and the strength of social ties they engage with in any given instance are the two factors required for identifying and distinguishing between these interactive modes.

Expressive action is primarily aimed at renewing or sustaining existing resource levels, characterized as normative and mainly intended to elicit recognition of ego's resource profile. This kind of interaction, also termed *homophilous*, tends to occur between individuals with strong ties who possess similar types and quantities of resources and by extension, similar ranges of positioning. This is the same idea as Bourdieu's emphasis on the significance of social distance and degrees of shared lifestyle as determinant factors explaining why individuals prefer to interact with other individuals with similar profiles in order to maintain distinctive status. However, rather than create the impression that a disposition towards sameness is responsible for rigid class stratification, Lin's approach emphasizes individual agency to explain why people are more likely to engage in homophilous/expressive action without suggesting that this is their only option.

Instrumental or heterophilous action, on the other hand, occurs when actor's attempt to engage individuals who occupy better positions with access to higher quality resources. Unlike expressive action, it requires far more effort with a much lower probability for equivalent returns and thus the key to identifying patterns of social mobility in Lin's scheme involves examining under what conditions "...instrumental action becomes successful through social capital" (ibid.:59). In order to make this assessment, however, it is necessary to consider a third criterion in addition to actors' positioning in the hierarchy and the strength of their ties, namely, what Lin describes as the strength-of-location proposition.

This is perhaps the most important contribution of Lin's theory to theorizing agency and social mobility because it provides a tool for explaining how individual agents move fluidly between social clusters of people (sharing similar resource profiles). Central to this aspect of his theory is the concept of the "social bridge," which he defines as "a linkage between two individual actors in a social network, the absence of which would cause the breakup of a cluster in to two separate clusters, each of which has two or more individual actors" (ibid.:70). As the primary means for gaining access to resources in another social cluster, bridges exercise an important function in enabling or restricting investment of social capital by determining the type and amount of returns, which has a direct bearing on the horizon of possibilities imaginable by a social actor.

Recalling Lin's use of a pyramidal scheme for illustrating the hierarchy of positions—which I prefer to imagine as a range of positioning more akin to Bourdieu's concept of the habitus in order to avoid reifying dynamic situational social phenomena—an actor's location in the social field determines their proximity to bridges and thus has important implications for improving resource profiles through instrumental interaction. Lin identifies three characteristics that can be used to assess the relative advantages of a given location. First, upper reachability refers to the most valuable resource accessible from a given location via social bridges. Secondly, heterogeneity describes the total qualitative spectrum of positions accessible, the diversity of potential instrumental interaction that proximity to bridges facilitates. And lastly, extensity is the quantitative measurement of the total positions reachable from a given location (ibid.:62). Together these factors influence the opportunities available to social actors and thus offer a compelling framework for evaluating the potential for social mobility from a person-centred standpoint. Whereas Bourdieu's practice theory concentrates mainly on structural positions and resulting social ties, Lin's introduces the third dimension of location in social networks and thereby opens up new possibilities for theorizing agency and social mobility.

Though Lin's approach in many ways does provide a more dynamic theoretical lens for reconciling the problem of action and structure in social life, the clarity with which he describes the conditions for investing social capital in a stratified society is marred by ambiguity in his treatment of the nature of resources. For example, the ascribed-acquired dichotomy he uses to distinguish between different kinds of resources requires considerable fleshing out if we are to confront the complexity of resource profiles in the making or condensation of identities. As critical topics including hypridity, diaspora, borderlands, ethnicization, and racialization have increasingly demonstrated, the lines separating ascription and acquisition are far more blurred than Lin's theory acknowledges.

One question that is insufficiently addressed concerns how ascribed resources facilitate acquired resources or not, depending on the culturally-determined power relations operating in a given domain of social life. In recent research treating ethnicity and race as unstable, mutable categories of identification, it has been shown that resources previously viewed as immutable can also be acquired as opposed to ascribed under certain circumstances (Grosfoguel 2004). The main problem in Lin's work is an underdeveloped theorization of the link between value and types of resources, which would inevitably involve confronting the culturally-specific frames of reference that establish value and resources enmeshed in different forms and degrees of unequal status.

An example of how Lin's theory might not capture the complexity of culturally-constructed systems of value and resources in a South Asian context might go like this: contrary to Western societies in which social actors who inherit material wealth can reap significant returns by investing it in social capital to improve their range of positions substantially, in India one may succeed in gaining wealth with only marginal changes in status since power is more dispersed across durable religious and caste positionings. Improving one's social standing on the Indian Subcontinent frequently involves re-signifying the value of one's caste and religion as a strategic resource and thus the process of improving social standing is arguably more diffuse than in Western capitalist societies where wealth, whether ascribed or acquired, has become the most important resource for achieving social mobility. This kind of re-signification of a durable low-status identity is exactly what I observed at work among Malayan families in Malabar, none of which were making great strides in expanding their material assets.

Consequently, Lin's theory should be adapted to flexibly accommodate culturally-determined forms of value and protocols for pursuing social interaction. Moreover, it must also account for Bourdieu's penetrating critique of power relations. Despite these shortcomings, I insist that Lin's theory of social capital can be usefully recontextualized in non-Western contexts to expand the prism of socio-musical mobility through which I interpret Malayan consultant's stories and my own ethnographic observations in chapter 5.

The theoretical moorings for this study can be summarized accordingly: Bourdieu's concept of "l'espace de possibles" (1994:61) is not flexible enough and so I reach for Lin's concept of bridges and location in social networks. Qualifications of Lin's theory are necessary to account for cultural differences and to avoid abandoning Bourdieu's critique of power relations and domination as inhibitors of mobility. Essentially, my theoretical framework is a combination of Bourdieu's practice theory and Lin's social capital model on the epistemological basis established by Postone's reinterpretation of Marx, Chakrabarty's postcolonial critique, and Qureshi's political economy approach to musical production. The chapter began by outlining the position that music constitutes a form of productive labour, and then turned to explore salient aspects of Bourdieu and Lin's complementary approaches to social action and structure. I now show how labour and identity articulate with each other to achieve social mobility in the domain of Malayan musical production in South India.

D. Malayan Musicality: Active Beauty in Fields of Opportunity

Malayan musicians inherit a specialized means for providing sonic ritual service in hereditary contexts that are decidedly feudal in their social organization. Tangible tools range from instruments like *ceṇṭa*, *ilattāḷam*, and kurum kuḻal, to materials that help shape the soundscape when deities dance or offerings are presented, including bells and anklets. Above all, the inalienable human voice is the most powerful vehicle Malayan are equipped with to perform their avakāśam right and duty. Combined with the ritual venue of the kāvŭ and the intangible knowledge and sensibility cultivated over generations of service to Malabar rajas and non-producing nobility of chieftains and priests, these tools largely define who the Malayan are in relation to others in northern Kerala, the Indian nation-state, and the world beyond.

Regulated, transmitted, and protected by the community through endogamous marriage alliances (marrying only within the group), the Malayan hereditary toolkit (tangible and intangible) offers more than a ritual apparatus for doing specific occupational tasks: It recreates pre-existing social identities anew. Accordingly, the identity itself becomes a resource for taking certain positions depending on its currency in a given field of production. Another way of putting it is to say that Malayan hereditary identities have potential to access a range of interactions with differently positioned actors with higher or lower status in certain social arenas.

Figure 20 depicts four fields of Malayan musical production to illustrate how families improve their standing in Kerala society by mobilizing collective hereditary musicality through social networks. The bottom green triangle (darker shade), labelled "Ritual," represents the social world in which Malayan inherit musical toolkits. The other three beige (lighter shade) triangles symbolize potential sites for applying musicality outside of hereditary contexts. These include opportunities to perform at: 1) political events, for example at rallies, parades, and recording studios (labelled "Politics"); 2) classical or light classical entertainment and pedagogical occasions ("Classical"); and 3) tourism venues at domestic private and public locations as well as foreign theatrical festivals abroad ("Touristic").

Resources contained in the "Ritual" triangle are under the exclusive domain of Malayan spirit-medium specialists and traditional healers and thus constitute "ascribed" skill sets, transmitted from one generation to the next. The type of action required to access and validate these resources is fittingly termed "homophilous," as Malayan need only interact with members from their own endogamous (marrying only within) kin-groups to acquire this knowledge. In contrast, the beige triangular fields contain resources that, from the hereditary standpoint of Malayan musicians, must be "acquired," for these are not part of the oral body of cultural assets falling under their collective custodianship. To access these external resources, Malayan form social bridges to facilitate relations with different communities by way of "heterophilous" action.

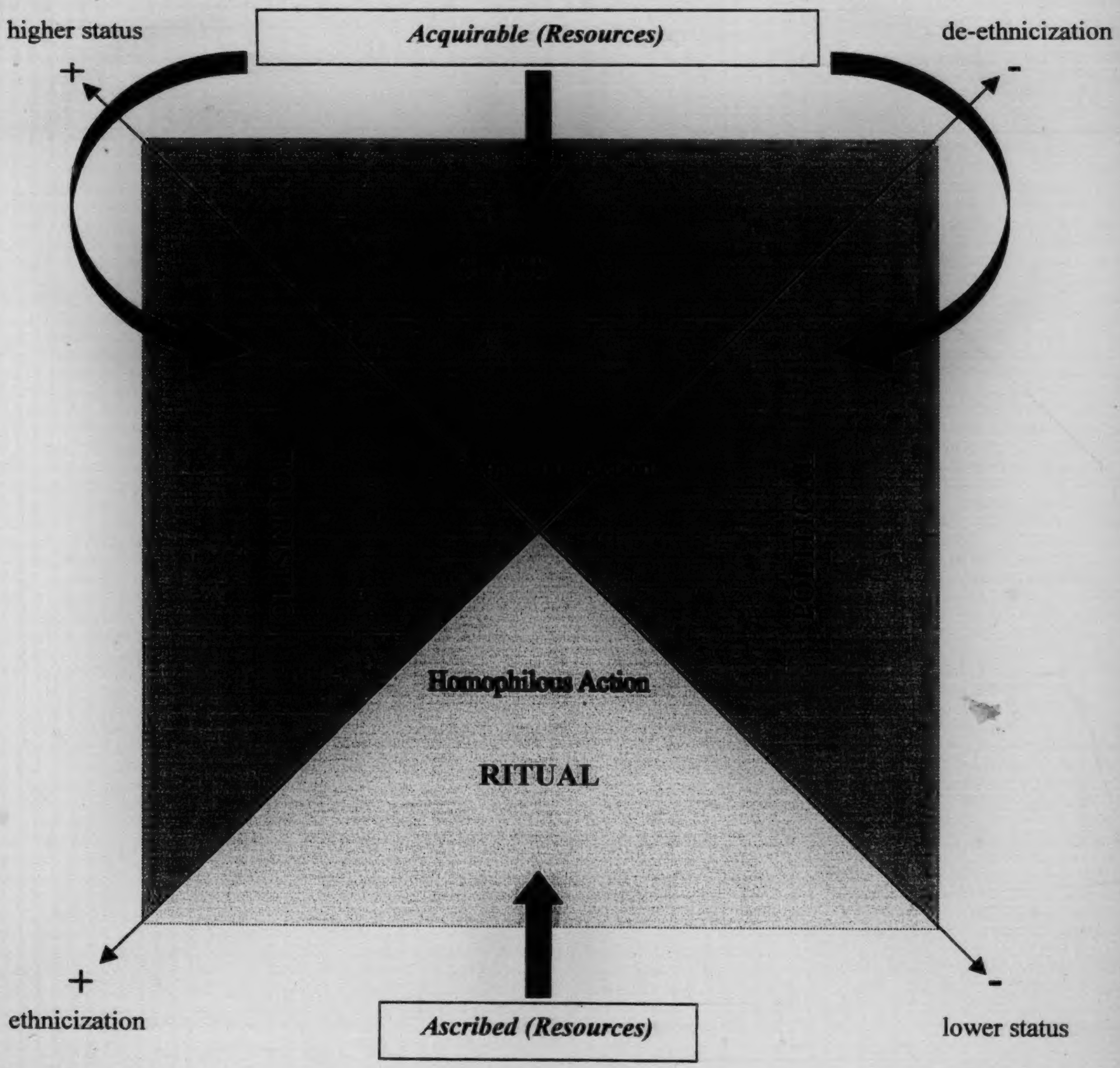
In addition to visually depicting social fields of musical production, the kind of resources they contain, and the action required to capture them, the diagram further qualifies the relationship between these parameters with two continua. In the first continuum, the available resources in the beige (lightly shaded) fields are differentially valued to reflect the extent to which they convey higher or lower prestige from the perspective of authorities (those with more political, cultural, and economic power) who influence the emergent status of cultural forms. Marked by a diagonal line with arrows running from the top left-hand corner to the bottom right-hand corner, the continuum indicates that ritual and political fields occupy a similar potential for articulating status, though they contain contrasting types of resources and entail different modes of social interaction. Classical and touristic fields, on the other hand, present opportunities to capture more esteemed resources as well as higher earning potential, which can be converted into prestige by raising levels of consumption.

Taking a more flexible outlook on the continuity and plasticity of caste identities in South Asian societies, the opposite continuum confronts the mobilization of caste as a form of ethnic identity capable of facilitating or limiting access to certain fields of production. The act of playing music in the "Ritual" and "Touristic" fields closest to the bottom right-hand corner is inextricably bound to the authenticity of Malayan caste identities. This is because legitimacy of hereditary rights and responsibilities, encapsulated by the term avakāśam, is based on Malayan pedigree. The situation is the opposite for the beige "Political" and "Classical" fields where emphasizing one's caste can only impede access to social positions. For centuries, Classical Karnatic music has been under the exclusive custodianship of Brahman and other high-caste communities and as a result, the cultural capital at stake depends on defining classicism in opposition to "little" traditions associated with lower status groups in society. For different reasons Kerala's political landscape makes a similar imperative for Hindus to subordinate caste affiliations to the nationalist and socialist causes for those aiming to expand their social capital into the dominant Communist or Congress parties.

To clarify how the terms ethnicization and de-ethnicization apply to caste it is necessary to recognize that the same identity attached to the hereditary profession of ritual service providers that legitimates Malayan avakāśam also discriminates against them in most other social situations in Kerala's public sphere. The act of performing hereditary occupational services facilitates socio-economic possibilities as the same time as it foregrounds belonging to a particular Hindu segment of society. Because of the explicit hierarchical ranking of occupational and ritual positions in South Asia according to producing and non-producing social groups, identities ostensibly associated with producers do not carry the same cultural capital as those of higher non-producing castes. Affirmative action policies have further strengthened the indexical association of

Malayan with their past experience of untouchability as removers of pollution in hereditary contexts. Following Indian Independence, special reference to scheduled castes (SCs) and scheduled tribes (STs) was incorporated into the constitution in 1950 to address issues of discrimination by reserving positions in educational and public service institutions for individuals from these communities. Since its inception, the reservation system has been repeatedly contested and critics insist that instead of bringing about the demise of caste it has had the reverse effect of strengthening and politicizing its boundaries, a process described as the ethnicization of caste (Brass 1990; Deliège 2004).

Figure 20. Malayan Fields of Musical Production


higher status
+
Acquirable (Resources)
de-ethnicization
-
Homophilous Action
RITUAL
+
ethnicization
Ascribed (Resources)
-
lower status

In recent decades research has demonstrated that caste identities are far more malleable and dynamic than orientalist and structural thinking allowed (Appadurai 1986; Talbot 2000; Dirks 2001; Thapar 2002). As a result, it is now more common to approach caste as a form of ethnicity, following Barth's constructive use of the term to problematize how boundaries define groups and how these divisions are maintained as opposed to focussing on cultural content (Barth 1969:15). In his words, interethnic relations, including the caste system, presupposes a "… structuring of interaction: a set of prescriptions governing situations of contact, and allowing for articulation in some sectors or domains of activity, and a set of proscriptions on social situations preventing inter-ethnic interaction in other sectors, and thus insulating parts of the cultures from confrontation and modification" (ibid.:16). From this standpoint, it is more productive to probe new ways of understanding how individuals emphasize or de-emphasize the ethnicity of their caste by strengthening or downplaying boundary maintenance in the process of navigating social fields.

In either case, the toolkit of specialized assets is not necessarily restricted to creating explicit caste-based identities in hereditary milieus. Depending on a community's dispositional means, some assets are more easily converted into other tools and knowledge, which under certain conditions, provide access to non-hereditary positionings through subtlized expression of caste identity. While caste continues to find prominence through both explicit modes of ethnicization and implicit modes of de-ethnicization as a key resource in the construction of social identities, the difference is one between publicly affirming caste solidarity by unambiguously demarcating group boundaries, and conversely, drawing on caste resources such as specialist knowledge in public contexts without overtly displaying caste signifiers.

Moreover, studies exploring instances where caste is de-emphasized for strategic purposes also tend to adopt a communal approach, usually following Srinivas' concept of Sanskritization (1952). This describes the process by which communities try to escape negative stigmas through upward mobility by imitating high caste ritual and cultural practices. In both paradigms, social mobility is treated as a communal initiative in which individual case studies merely serve to confirm wider trajectories and ambitions pursued at the group level, either by amplifying existing caste identities (ethnicization) or by reinventing caste identities altogether (Sanskritization). This concentration on community stems from the established genealogy of Indic humanist and social science scholarship that privileges collectivity over individual subjectivity. The problem with research on collectivities, is that they tend to interpret Indian selfhood, with the exception of key philosophical, famous, or political figures, as a reflection of communal essences and actions rather than as constitutive of individual agency and variation (Blackburn and Arnold 2004).

Social mobility among SC communities in Kerala is pursued on a familial and individual basis since the conditions enabling the politicization of caste are undermined by grassroots secular political loyalties and party control over education, religious, and public institutions. That being said, beneath the prominence of religious and political boundaries in Kerala, caste remains an important component of identity, regularly ethnicized or de-ethnicized in daily life to make a living, obtain government benefits, or cultural recognition. It is at once, a positive form of cultural capital and a locus of discrimination and social exclusion. Building on the concept of ethnicization in the framework of Lin and Bourdieu's complementary theoretical standpoints, I move to explore examples of social arrangements in which Malayan position themselves as producers of music in non-hereditary contexts to improve their social standing.

When the Malayan perform teyyam or other hereditary ritual services they have no option but to ethnicize their stigmatized caste identity since the social boundaries that make teyyam possible depend on clearly demarcated caste-based roles. This begs the question: why do the Malayan continue to participate in the recreation of social relations that position them as inferior according to their ascribed status as service providers? Indeed, many choose not to follow hereditary pathways in order to escape this positioning. However, the situation is more complex when all forms of capital at stake in the teyyam arena are taken into consideration.

To begin with, the embodiment of śakti (sacred power) in teyyam performances facilitates closer proximity to high-caste positionings and in the process enacts a form of symbolic subversion whereby high castes publicly behave deferentially towards the Malayan human medium. As noted by Freeman, the pollution associated with teyyam ritualists constitutes a particularly disquieting source of power from the point of view of other castes in Malabar society (1991:642), largely because of its unpredictable consequences for family prosperity and well-being should it be disrespected. Moreover, few service-providing castes possess this form of subaltern ritual capital legitimized by avakāśam status and its authority in the *ceṛujanmam* network of shrines. Another reason is that the transmission of the community's hereditary toolkit, with all its versatile and portable components, is largely contingent on the sustained social occasion and ritual practice of teyyam. Going further, recall that there is a strong obligational sentiment towards ancestors and the deities under Malayan custodianship. Finally, the recent move to commodify the synesthetic experience and visual image of teyyam in the tourism industry and cultural festivals has given the hereditary toolkit and context new currency, driven by transnational markets for cultural experiences that conform to individually-filed expectations for ethnic authenticity (MacCannell 1976; Cohen 1988; Rojek 1997; Mason 2004).

For these reasons, the Malayan continue to perform teyyam despite the stigma attached to the hereditary identity they are compelled to assume in order to provide the service. In Lin's terms, this would confirm that there are significant stakes for amplifying the hereditarily-derived body of ascribed resources through expressive (homophilous) modes of interaction aimed at preserving the status quo. In the "Ritual" space (bottom green triangle), the interactive focus is on confirming ascribed status through the recreation of familiar relationships; consequently, the scope for socio-musical mobility is narrow due to limited quantity and quality of resources (forms of tangible and intangible capital) within the cluster of neo-feudal social relations of production regulating positionings. To capture more resources, Malayan musicians must find ways to move outside of this field.

The only way to move into other fields of cultural production is to form new types of social relationships through instrumental (heterophilous) interaction that by virtue of the confluence of macro-historical conditions (the regional dynamics) influencing micro-textures of higher positionings, have the potential to facilitate access to more and better fields. Social bridges are key in this process because they provide the catalyst linking individuals (or families in India) with lower capital profiles to higher profile clusters of social positionings, thereby facilitating access to fields where the former can improve their socio-economic standing.

These bridges can be created by ethnicizing Malayan identity at the right location and moment in time. For example, the upper left field, labelled "Touristic" in the diagram, shares the condition of ethnicizing caste identity with the ritual hereditary field. This field of production involves performing teyyam as spectacle on concert stages at cultural festivals organized in Indian and foreign urban venues for entertainment purposes. Despite the sweeping changes that mark the process of recontextualizing rituals as theatrical art forms, Malayan use their assets in the same modality as ritual arenas without the efficacy required to establish the presence of a supernatural being in a human medium. From the point of view of musicians, the active sonic beauty is mobilized to impress audiences in an effort to capture capital in the process of producing a temporally-bracketed experience with exchange value in the sense described above in the discussion of the political economy of music. Part of the experience's value is contingent on the expectations of the consumer, which, in the context of ethnic genres of spectacle framed as authentic forms of ritual experience in touristic borderzones, assume that the identities presented reflect the real custodians of the tradition, the hereditary caste of ritual specialists.

Here is where Bourdieu's more developed idea of cultural capital can improve Lin's theoretical framework by emphasizing that location and the quantity of capital possessed do not guarantee the creation of social bridges. The Malayan possess a particular form of cultural capital that enables some members to form a bridge at the right place and time and under the right conditions. A serendipitous meeting between a Malayan musician (or group of musicians) and an Indian high-caste or Western culture broker at a teyyam festival might be sufficient to create a bridge that gives the Malayan musician access to a global field of musical production that is higher paid, more prestigious, and more dignified in its artistic framing. The point is that caste must be emphasized in order to form this bridge and take advantage of the potential to enter new fields of production with better resources.

Another strategy for forming bridges through instrumental (heterophilous) interaction is to de-ethnicize caste identities. The other two triangular fields in the diagram each represent an example of socio-musical venues that are more likely to be accessed by converting the hereditary toolkit and de-emphasizing the caste-based identity the tools are equipped to amplify in ritual contexts. The upper right field, marked political, represents another landscape of opportunities some Malayan enter by recontextualizing their musical assets to deliver a useful service to political parties.

In Kerala, there are two main party factions, the nationalist Congress-led United Democratic Front and the Communist Party of India (Marxist)-led Left Democratic Front (Nossiter 1982). Although the Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has made some gains in recent years (Chaturvedi 2006), sectarian parties divided on religious grounds are predominantly Christian and Muslim-led minority political blocs. Most Hindus support secular Congress or Marxist parties, both of which reject any public expression of caste identity. Thus for a Malayan to be accepted and valorized among the higher echelons of either political bloc, they must de-ethnicize their caste in favour of the particular brand of solidarity advocated by the political group—nationalist secularist or communist—to whom they offer their musical assets as service to their chosen Party. In some cases the service is purely an exchange for economic and symbolic resources and in others it is more rooted in Malayan allegiance to a particular political ideology and the expectation of volunteer service that goes with it. Volunteer service, however, should not be taken to mean that the value of the resources in this field are less. On the contrary, social bridges to political positionings in high places can facilitate many intangible and indirect tangible gains (Lin 2001). For instance, a Malayan who effectively lends a powerful voice to singing political rally songs may be able to find valuable job security for family members.

Above the ritual triangle in the diagram, the field, "Classical," is the third example of non-hereditary productive space in which Malayan are improving their socio-musical reputations. Until only recently, classical (Karnatic) music performance and training in South India was the exclusive purview of high castes, especially Brahmins, and venues for musical occasions were primarily at temples and royal courts (Seetha 1981; Kuppuswami 1992; Viswanathan and Allen 2004; Subramanian 2006). After Indian Independence (1947) the Indian state and rising middle classes took over the patronage of classical idioms and the institutions they established were opened to all citizens who could afford training or secure scholarships (Zarrilli 1991). Already bearing acute musical sensibility and knowledge of generative principles of musicality in the wider South Asian musical frame of reference, Malayan were predisposed to adapt their hereditary assets to learn classical idioms. Many were able to form social bridges through student-teacher relationships with high-caste musicians, and now many Malayan are teaching Karnatic music to high-caste students in northern Malabar, where there are fewer Brahmin and other high-caste music specialists.

The cultural capital associated with classical music settings is more prestigious than that of political fields. As the highest expression of artistic achievement and of national culture in the southern Subcontinent, Karnatic music is the equivalent of Western art music idioms cultivated under European feudal arrangements centred at courts and churches. Bourdieu explains how contemporary consumption of classical music became an effective way of distinguishing one's status from others' through articulation of taste (1984:340). Likewise, in South India, Karnatic music and other classical idioms, including dance-dramas like *katakaḷi*, acquired new currency as an expressive tool for marking social status among the upwardly mobile bourgeois classes through patronage of music lessons in the family, consumption of cassette recordings, listening to the radio, and attendance of public concerts (Subramanian 2006).

This emergent market, particularly among the numerically dominant and economically mobile Tiyyas (Osella and Osella 2000), created a demand for classical music education in the public sphere. Whereas most families are interested in learning classical idioms in order to consume resources (cultural capital) and articulate a lifestyle aimed at improving their social standing, the Malayan are boosting their status by training to become producers of classical music services in response to a growing demand among high and low castes. However, to improve their chance of capturing valuable resources in classical milieus through instrumental interaction, Malayan are encouraged to de-emphasize their hereditary identity as ritual removers of pollution in the same way they de-ethnicize caste in the political field. To access relationships with the potential of serving as social bridges to classical domains, the Malayan mobilize their hereditary toolkit while distancing themselves from the identity it is capable of creating.

In this last section I have connected the theoretical ideas presented earlier in the chapter with Malayan ethnographic examples. Chapter five of the dissertation proceeds to flesh out the case studies that provide the evidence of the pathways of mobility illustrated in the diagram above. Unlike Bourdieu's field of cultural production in which producers are separated from their products in the case of literary canons, or plotted as static occupational labels in his study of consumer lifestyles and strategies of class distinction, my design is person-centred. Specifically, it offers a visual heuristic for seeing the world from the standpoint of hereditary Indian musicians seeking to widen the scope of available positionings. By way of productive musical labour, their work involves converting or affirming hereditary toolkits through interaction with others who find the experiences their assets produce useful.[41]

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[41] So far, for the most part Malayan have not been alienated from the musical product of their labour even despite the proliferation of cassette technology in which they participate (Manuel 1993:7). As they become more involved in global cultural industries, however, they will inevitably engage in more profitable recording ventures whereby stakes are raised and issues of commercialization and cultural property are contested.

CHAPTER 5

PATHWAYS TO IMPROVING SOCIO-MUSICAL STATUS

From historical, to ritual, to modern musical domains of experience, the preceding chapters concentrated on defining key concepts central to Malayan self-identities. They also situated the representational agencies that inform my interpretations and laid out the theoretical prism through which I address the topic of socio-musical mobility. In this chapter the goal is to thickly describe a series of microscopic portraits of Malayan social discourse in an attempt to highlight the range of pathways taken to improve familial musical reputations. Working from the premise "that social actions are comments on more than themselves" (Geertz 1979:23), I unfold three ethnographic case studies to support the dissertation's wider claim: that there is ample flexibility as to how hereditary socio-musical assets can be applied in South Asian regions where alternative modernities are grounded in more equitable patterns of social development.

The first two sections (A and B) centre on Malayan families from southern and northern Kannur respectively. Section A features a family that embodies Malayan movement into "Classical" fields of production, while section B foregrounds life stories depicting a joint-family's participation in "Political" arenas. Section C presents a portrait of a musician who has successfully extended his ritual music capabilities into the domain of international artistry, an opportunity that materialized through connections with private and public tourism agencies. His case study demonstrates how some Malayan are entering "Touristic" fields of production on a global scale, travelling from regional capitals to cosmopolitan Western cities. Appropriately, it is the last case study discussed and thus serves as a fitting catalyst for raising some of the issues concerning growing commercial interest in Malayan musicality associated with *teyyam* ritual experience. Highlighting pivotal social relationships as bridges between Malayan individuals and fields of production outside hereditary contexts, the chapter uses evidence shared through life histories to demonstrate how some families are improving the status of their musical labour, socially and economically.

Beginning where the previous chapter left off, the argument driving this discussion is that socio-musical mobility is contingent on considerable interplay between individual and familial subaltern agencies (the Malayan case studies) and upper-caste positionings in non-hereditary fields of production. Even the most enterprising and dynamic examples of Malayan agency require some form of heterophilous interaction with social locations superior to Malayan positions. This is the only way around structural limitations that pose formidable obstacles for marginalized communities determined to improve their social standing. The weight behind the model outlined in the theory chapter rests on persuasive accounts of lived experience featured in case studies of new productive relations, and thus these life stories present the most compelling body of evidence supporting this thesis. As a way into the texture of these histories I begin sections A and C with excerpts from my fieldnotes, and section B, with an account from a intriguing and turbulent political life history.

A. Mastering the Karnatic Classical Idiom

Following India's Independence in 1947, nation-building initiatives spearheaded by government cultural authorities and institutions, combined with a reform movement led by non-Brahmin musicians, established South Indian classical Karnatic music as a national art form. Theoretically, musical training was supposed to be accessible to all Indian citizens as part of a shared cultural legacy; in practice, though, the rising middle classes succeeded most in taking advantage of this dramatic shift in patronage (Nandakumar 1999; Subramanian 2006). Departing from the traditional *guru-śiṣyan* (*gurukulam*) bond that regulated transmission of classical musical knowledge among high castes in the past, state governments created performing arts institutions with the mandate of offering instruction to all, regardless of caste or religious affiliation. Among the most important centres were the Madras Music Academy, state branches of the Sangeet Natak Akademi based in New Delhi, and in Kerala, the Kalamandalam. In the struggle to accumulate cultural capital through a bourgeois system of music patronage, aspiring upwardly mobile families hastened to ensure their children were exposed to classical music by enrolling them in music and dance lessons.

However, not all villages were located near traditional centres of classical music education. With fewer Brahminical temple settlements established in the northern regions of Kerala compared to the south (Veluthat 1978), people living in these districts had less exposure to South Indian classical music than the central and southern former kingdoms of the state. Brahmins, including Nambūtiris and other communities, were the principal bearers of Karnatic musical knowledge in Kerala, and since they typically settled on estates in the vicinity of Hindu temples surrounded by fertile lands, there were fewer Brahmin families in the more rugged, northern part of the state where paddy (rice) cultivation is less productive. Consequently, when the demand for classical music training increased with the rise of living standards among well-positioned lower castes like the *Tiyya*[42], there were few music schools or high caste teachers to turn to—a situation that opened up an opportunity for musically-inclined members of lower castes to take leadership roles as music educators. Possessing exceptional musical skills and knowledge associated with their caste-based occupation as ritual specialists and traditional healers, many Malayan were naturally drawn to study Karnatic music to fill this pedagogical void in northern districts by becoming music teachers. Presently, they teach out of their homes, public schools, and private music schools located in rented commercial space in towns and villages. The following excerpt from my fieldnotes evokes a scene that took place during my first visit to a music school run by a Malayan classical music educator, Ananth, who recently married Rija, also an accomplished classically-trained singer and the only daughter of my *ceṇṭa* guru, Swamidasan.

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[42] A numerically dominant caste associated with the traditional occupation of toddy tapping, the labour of extracting the fermented sap from coconut palms to sell as an alcoholic beverage and cooking ingredient. Tiyyas were also important small-scale tenant cultivators. They are called Izhava in southern Kerala where they occupy the same position as the highest and most successful caste among the ex-untouchable communities (Aiyappan 1965; Osellas 2000).

March 21, 2004, afternoon: Tyagaraja Music School, Pannur, Kannur Dist.

Rija, Laure, and I arrive at the busy main intersection in Pannur where Ananth and Rija's school is located on the second story of an old building. Bombarded by the raucous clamour of traffic and flooded with nauseating diesel fumes in the summer heat, we make our way up the narrow staircase. Ananth anxiously greets us and promptly introduces Mr. Muraleedharan Nayar, a middle-aged man with a neatly-trimmed moustache dressed in a white muṇṭŭ and neatly pressed cotton shirt who works in finance. The conversation shifts from the broken Malayalam or "Manglish" we normally speak with Rija and Ananth to English, and the man informs us that his son is an accomplished student at the music school, which he confidently qualifies to be the best in the area.

In a large spacious room, about thirty boys and girls of all ages and some women are seated on carpets in front of a table and a few chairs placed at the front of the class; all greet and observe our unintentionally pretentious entrance with patient, inquisitive warm smiles. We are invited to be seated in the chairs at the front of the room and soon find ourselves sipping cool mango lassies that sooth the uncomfortable effects of the densely hot Malabar air the ceiling fans circulate over our heads. Standing authoritatively at the front by our side, Mr. Nayar introduces us in both Malayalam and English as special guests affiliated with the University of Kannur, who are interested in learning about the music and culture of Kerala. After this speech, Ananth leads the class in singing an ālāpanam, outlining the contours of a rāgam. After a few minutes they begin a devotional song or gīta. Ananth stands and claps the eight-beat pattern for aṭi tāḷam and the pupils follow his lead with undivided attention and respect for their guru.

Arranging a Musical Union

The house where Swamidasan and his family now live is located in the village of Kathirur, on the northwest side of the busy main road between the coastal town of Thalassery and the former royal centre of the Kottayam Kingdom at Kuthuparamba, several kilometres inland to the east. Swamidasan constructed the house in 1999 to accommodate his nuclear family, a wife, three children, and the future wives of his two sons, after leaving a home formerly shared with his brother and mother in a village nearby. Relatively affluent by Malayan standards, the two-storey home is made of large red bricks painted white, with a concrete roof, a small garden, an open well, and an attached Indian lavatory with an exterior entrance. The use of concrete, even if it is only for the roof, indicates a higher status than many Malayan can afford, as does the location on a main road as opposed to other properties located on minor roads or pathways. The Osellas have written extensively about the significance accorded to "durable prestige" in the form of property and house investments, noting that even the choice of name for a property is an important indicator of upwardly mobile status (2000:149). Whereas some families call their house after the son who is in line to inherit the property, or adopt Sanskritized or English terms of dwelling, Malayan who establish their own middle-class home away from the lineage *taṟavāṭŭ* often choose a name that explicitly connects their property, house, and nuclear family to classical music. Swamidasan named his home, "Raga Sudha House," and as if that was not enough to communicate is family's reputation as a "*sangīttam kuṭumbam*" (musical family)—he also had large, painted metal wire designs shaped to outline a Karnatic *vīna* and a Hindustani (North Indian) *tabla* mounted on the front metal grill of his marble veranda (fig. 21).

More musical symbolism greets you as you enter the common room where guests are received. High up on one of the walls facing the entry, is a large photo of legendary Kerala Karnatic singer, Yesudas, while on the same wall, on a built-in mantle, there are pictures of family teyyam performances on display next to pan-Hindu images of Gods and Goddesses, synthetic flowers, and a small cassette player and radio. Significantly, although Karnatic music is unambiguously front and centre in the exterior and interior decorating of the home, teyyam is still given a prominent place. Unlike the pattern of rejecting hereditary professions found in other communities, as in the Osellas' case study of the upwardly mobile Izhava caste formerly associated with toddy tapping, this description suggests a much more complex picture of how Sanskritization unfolds in the case of the Malayan. Far from turning away from their hereditary occupational status, more affluent Malayan appear to be expanding it to encompass more prestigious, yet related, musical traditions. The success that Swamidasan's children have achieved in classical music studies provides more evidence indicating there is substantial continuity between Malayan hereditary musicality and other South Asian musical idioms.

While I was studying ceṇṭa under Swamidasan, there were a total of six members living in the household. Besides Swamidasan and his wife Somani (known to us as "*Amma*," mother), there was the eldest son Rajesh and his new bride Shyji, followed by the only daughter and middle child, Rija, and the youngest of the family, Jitesh. Everyone except Shyji and Amma was actively involved in music: Rajesh is trained in teyyam performance, but later turned to more popular musical genres, including learning how to read Western notation; Rija is in many ways the most accomplished member of the family in the field of classical music, a respected (B+ rank) All India Radio artist in light music who completed the *Ganabhuṣaṇam* certificate of vocal music issued by the University of Madras; Jitesh studied tabla under a Muslim guru in the region (also completing an exam) and now teaches out of the family home when he is not building a name as a key leader of the next generation of teyyam artists. While many families from other communities are also actively engaged in learning music, as reflected in the number of students I witnessed Rija teach out of the home, very few demonstrated the level of interest, commitment, and aptitude for music embodied by Swamidan's family. As for the patriarch himself, his life history boasts many fine achievements in musical fields as well, including a thorough background in teyyam and other Malayan ritual traditions, as well as training in the high-caste rhythmic improvisation and composition art of ceṇṭa temple drumming called *tāyampaka*, notably under such well-known Malabar masters as Appukkuṭṭan Mārār and Shankarankutty Mārār (Groesbeck 1995).

Despite the apparent exceptional level and scope of musicality that characterizes this family's identification with music excellence, the engaging reality of their case study is its relatively unremarkable story when compared with the collective socio-musical patterns found in other Malayan families. Only a short distance down the road in the village of Eranholy, a younger family also appears to be launching musical ambitions along a similar vein. Through an interview with the head of the household, Pavithran, I discovered that many Malayan have also moved into the field of *periya mēḷam*, a temple ensemble popular for weddings, temple processions, and other rituals throughout South India, which is principally made up of the double-sided *tavil* drum and the long double-reed instrument with a bell called the *nāgasvaram*. Pavithran inherited his father's job of providing tavil musical services at the local Tiyya Sri Jaganath temple, devoted to the popular Vaishnava God Krishna. However, in the early days his father collected the salary and it was only after he married that he quit the low-paying temple job and began to earn his own living. In addition to performing teyyam during the festival season, he now plays at weddings and keeps a day job at a local bank. The combined income appears to have been sufficient to construct a house similar to Swamidasan's, and moreover, he affords classical music lessons for his eldest son and *Bharatanaṭyam* dance lessons for his daughter. Compared with his own poor beginnings, his family's situation has changed dramatically. He reflects:

> During my early days there was no one to encourage me. Now, we send our children for learning different things [music lessons], spending a lot of money. … It wasn't until I joined school that I could enrol at the Thalassery Institute of Music and learn under Balan Master. I went there to practice singing. (Aug.15, 2003, Eranholy)

Although Pavithran's son is a promising young singer who could go far in classical music training, he is also expected to carry on the hereditary tradition of teyyam. We were in fact privileged to attend his first embodiment of a teyyam at a kāvŭ near Eranholy, a feat he accomplished at just thirteen years of age.

Over the course of my stay in the region I encountered many families like this one who were beginning to make inroads in classical music fields. What distinguishes Swamidasan's family, however, is a movement one step further to the position of teaching classical idioms, which brings me back to Rija.

As I began to make regular visits to Swamidasan's home I soon noticed that the daughter of the house was also giving lessons out of the same room in which I studied ceṇṭa. Sometimes I would arrive and she would be finishing a lesson or my session would end and the kids would start filing in to the small second-storey music room that also doubled as Jitesh's bedroom. During one visit when Laure was present, I asked if we could observe her lessons and she immediately agreed in her usual modest tone. Elegantly dressed in a turquoise *churidar* (salwar kameez) with gold bangles dangling from her wrist, she sat on the edge of the bed and led the standard prayer to Sarasvati, intoning the first (*sa*), fifth (*pa*) and eighth (*sa* octave higher) degrees. She then moved on to the lessons, using a small Western electronic keyboard to help the students tune their voices as they sat cross-legged with little notebooks in front of them. Rectangular in shape, the room provided enough space lengthwise to accommodate three rows of pupils, about nine all together. The class included both boys and girls with a range in age from about seven to twelve. Meanwhile, several mothers waited outside of the room, listening from the open space at the top of the stairs. Rija's approach paralleled the method used in Karnatic institutions in most urban centres: the teacher sings a line which the students then imitate, the lesson unfolding thus in responsorial fashion. Keeping time by gently tapping her right hand on her knee, she began the lesson with simple exercises used in Karnatic music pedagogy to train students to become thoroughly familiar with the *sargam* solmization system, the syllables that represent the tones of the scale (*sa re ga ma pa dha ni sa*). These foundational exercises, known as *saraḷi variśai*, introduce the melodic concept of rāgam (typically beginning with *māyamāḷavagowḷa* as was the case here) and the rhythmic concept of tāḷam (always starting with the eight-beat *aṭi tāḷam*) as well as encourage students to develop control and accuracy in pitch and intonation. Later, she progressed to lead the singing of a standard gītam taught to beginners. Having recently completed a six-month period of Karnatic training through the Department of Music at the University of Kerala in Thiruvananthapuram, a prestigious centre for classical music, we could see that she was teaching in exactly the same way as our distinguished guru.

I became increasingly curious as to how a woman from a disadvantaged caste background could end up teaching a musical tradition formerly dominated by high castes to mixed classes, including higher castes.[43] As I met more Malayan families initiating a second generation of children in Karnatic education, I became more interested in learning about Rija's life history in music. When we heard through kitchen talk among the women in the household[44] that a marriage was in the process of being arranged between Rija and another successful Malayan classical singer and music educator, I became more intrigued by what appeared to be a trend among some Malayan to corner the market on Karnatic music education. Sure enough, Rija and Ananth were married in between my fieldwork stints, so when we returned I was able to meet them on several occasions and learn more about both of their life histories. Their marriage alliance—encouraged by shared musicianship and careers in music education—raised interesting questions about how hereditary assets can be extended to artistic fields monopolized by higher castes. How have Malayan families like Rija's and Ananth's acquired levels of classical musical competence high enough to become reputable teachers so soon after the democratization of classical arts in post-Independence Kerala? Second, now that they have achieved a certain status and reputation, what does their future look like in terms of economic security?

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[43] It was entirely inappropriate to ask the women or children attending the lessons which castes they belong to (a serious taboo in a society that for the most part avoids discussion of caste), but it seemed safe to

A Prized Student of the Thalassery Institute of Music

It is crucial to trace some of the pivotal moments in Rija's life history in order to properly frame the position she occupies today in the music education scene of southern Kannur. Following the Kerala custom for women to return to their village to deliver and be cared for by their mother, Somani gave birth to Rija at her family *taṟavāṭŭ* in the highlands of Kannur district in 1975. In those days, women still gave birth in their homes under the care of Malayan midwives (*pĕṯṯicci*), and so it is not surprising that Rija was not born in a hospital considering the generations of traditional knowledge her

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assume that the women were not Malayan, judging by the formal interaction between them and Swamidasan's family. Moreover, they came from nearby, which also suggests they belong to other communities, since Malayan families tend not to aggregate in clusters. Only one Malayan household would have been needed to serve an entire village in neo-feudal times.

[44] This is an example of the kind of ethnographic domain that is inaccessible to men. The only way I became aware of the marriage arrangements was through Laure, who became close friends with the women in this family.

community possesses in the field.[45] Her earliest memories of music are of songs her father taught her, but she also remembers her mother singing too, and her older brother Rajesh (*ēṭṭan*) would sing cinema songs. By the time she reached the fifth standard (eleven years old), her father enlisted the help of Kunhambu Master, a Malayan of his generation from the region who was trained in classical music, probably in the neighbouring state of Tamil Nadu. He came weekly to their joint-family home for six months, during which time she focussed on learning classical music (*śastriyasangītam*) in the form of *kirtanams* (devotional songs).

Her first experience performing in public was at a school recitation contest in which she won first place. In the following years she became increasingly involved in singing and recitation competitions at the sub-district and district levels. In the eight standard (thirteen years old), her father started allowing her to perform at *gānamēḷa* events (concerts of cinema songs played by an Indian orchestra) in nearby urban centres, including Thalassery and Kannur. It was at these public concerts that she began to make a name for herself as a popular singer of light music. A dialogic excerpt from an interview brings the period of her life leading up to this moment into focus:

> RIJA: For the gānamēḷa I would go to nearby places… Thalassery, Kannur, even Thiruvananthapuram. Then, I don't remember. After that, there were many places
>
> HARI: What was your role? What kind of songs were you singing?
>
> RIJA: They were film songs. "Cembaratipūvū" [example of a song by Shyama].
>
> KALEY: Where did you learn that song?
>
> RIJA: That song I learned from a sister [cousin]; my father's older brother's daughter is a music teacher. During that period of six months I talked about, when she was in the seventh standard, I would go to her place. Their house was near our house. My father would take me there and I would sing. She taught me cinema songs and *laḷithagāna* (light songs).

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[45] It seems relevant to note here that Shyji, Rija's sister-in-law, and Somani, her mother, have also successfully converted their hereditary assets, though in the domain of midwifery instead of music. Both of are trained as nurses and work at the Thalassery public hospital. This is another example of building on oral knowledge inherited in hereditary contexts by giving them new currency in a modern job market.

> HARI: What was her name?
>
> RIJA: Achita.
>
> *We convince her to sing a few lines of a song for us; she acquiesces, singing:*
>
> *Cembaratipūvēcu, Dēvanennekandō*
>
> [Has the God seen me with the flower in my hair]
>
> *Ambalathilulilannō, Swarnaradhagōsham*
>
> [In the temple there is a celebration taking place with a golden chariot]

Revealed in this part of the interview is the role an older cousin had in steering Rija towards a career in music education. Also going on to pursue a career as a music teacher, Achita must have had a timely influence over Rija (two years difference between them) at a critical juncture in her musical development, before Rija began singing regularly in public.

At one point after she finished her period of study under the tutelage of Kunhambu Master and before she landed on the public concert scene, Rija began a seven-year period of study under a prominent local Karnatic teacher, Balan Master. Under his guidance she blossomed into a confident performer grounded in a solid classical music education. Following her Gānabhuṣaṇam exam in vocal music at the Institute she began teaching lessons out of her home. Eventually, she took a job in the public school system as a music teacher after completing a college arts education, a relatively new trend among Malayan women. At the same time as she pursued teaching, she also accepted recording contracts with local (even opposing) political parties, devotional projects, and even a nationalist recording initiative, *Kargil dēshabhaktigānangal* (Kargil songs of national faith) produced in support of the Indian troupes fighting Pakistan in the Kargil mountain range of the Himalayas in 1999.[46] Finally, Rija passed an All India Radio exam with a high B+ rating in the category of light music at the station in Kozhikode. When offered the opportunity to go to Delhi, she turned it down to pursue a career in teaching. Without the intensive training program in Karnatic music she completed under Balan's supervision, it would have been much more difficult to gain access to the classical music education field, particularly the job with the public school system.

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[46] The Kargil conflict erupted in 1999 when Pakistan troops crossed the Line of Control in Indian-occupied Kashmir.

Already in this chapter, Balan Master was mentioned as one of Eranholy Pavithran's principal teachers at the Thalassery Institute of Music, a private school he founded at the insistence of his guru. The Institute is the premier centre for Karnatic music training and official examinations in northern Malabar. Originally from Eranholy, Balan Master was raised in the hills of neighbouring Wayanad district where his father worked as a tea seller. Though it was never confirmed by Balan Master in our interview, his closest students indicated that he belonged to the numerically dominant Tiyya caste, one of the most powerful and successful (entrepreneurially and professionally) communities in Malabar society in recent decades. As they increasingly swelled the ranks of the middle classes, gifted Tiyya musicians were and continue to be well placed to share some of the custodianship over "pure music" (Karnatic classical), previously the exclusive domain of high castes at Brahminical temple centres. Hence, when Balan Master displayed a keen musical sensibility at an early age, he eventually ended up in the hilly fertile district of Palakkad, arguably the most important region for Karnatic music in Kerala, due to its high population of Brahmins and geographical location at the main pass through the mountains to Tamil Nadu. For six years he studied in Palakkad under Puthukkode Krishnamoorthi, a Brahmin guru who gave the following advice, as remembered by Balan:

> After education, what musician's normally do is to teach classes at houses. But I didn't do that, following the direction from my teacher. I believed there was no music in the North [northern Kerala], and he said: "you go and start a new institution, independently, and through it mould a new generation." In that way, the institution, the Institute of Music, started in 1970. A registered institute. (March 7, 2004, Thalassery)

Many students have passed through the doors of the school under the guidance of Balan Master since 1970, but the musical abilities of rare gifted students are remembered fondly: "Among them, some have stayed in my memory. Among the girl students, Rija is perfect, very neat." While discussing the challenges of moulding the natural abilities of young Malayan students into a sensibility and expressive versatility more suitable for "pure music," he had this to say about Rija:

> In [Karnatic music] class, that [*tōṯṯam* style of singing] can be changed through the high efficiency of pure music. In this way, a number of a young men and women accomplished this. A child [young woman] called Rija, who studied here… nobody can tell by hearing her songs that she is Malayan. (ibid.)

Putting aside his evaluative take on the baggage of Malayan styles of ritual music compared with virtues of "pure music," what emerges from his comments is the general assumption that Malayan students are better equipped to reach superior levels of musicality in classical idioms, providing they can be taught to conceptualize musical performance differently. When asked if Malayan children grasp the musical concepts sooner than most, he replied: "Yes they can grasp it sooner. The habit is in them. Earlier music was more instilled in them." In her critical history of music in South India, Subramanian describes how "redefining the classical and its other became a convenient vehicle for marginalizing part of the repertoire that ritual performers specialized in" (2006:18). However, it is an exercise in gaining perspective to recall that the debate between classical and non-classical specialists that she refers to is one that surfaced between traditions that nonetheless evolved in close proximity to one another around temples, and benefited from similar sources of patronage. Malayan rituals, by contrast, did not evolve near classical music centres of patronage like Tanjavur or Palakkad, and thus maintained a distinct set of musical parameters rooted in low caste Dravidian worshiping practices. Yet this has not prevented some students from converting hereditary musicality successfully, undetected in the field of "pure music."

Recall that the argument presented in chapter four rests on the premise that Malayan forge relations with people located within the field of musical production in which they wish to enter. A combination of hereditary musical sensibilities and hard work through practice enabled Rija to form a social bridge with a classical music specialist of the stature of Balan Master. Their relationship appears to have been the principal social catalyst largely responsible for facilitating Rija's entry into the classical field. But more than that, acquiring valuable "classical" capital as one of Balan Master's prized students also opened new possibilities for entering other fields not represented in the diagram presented in chapter four. Her success in the field of light music at the All India Radio is a good example (Appendix A), but also the numerous recording contracts ranging from parody songs for political parties, to patriotic songs, to devotional songs centred around the popular spirit *Kuṭṭiccāttan* propitiated through teyyam. Moreover, there is also the field of gānamēḷa, popular concerts featuring Western and Indian light orchestras who accompany singers who personalize versions of songs composed by music directors working in the Malayalam film industry. The basis of her regional fame is mainly due to her performances on these stages of popular culture, but the confidence, technique, and sensibility required to make a lasting impression in the crowded space of aspiring music stars can be linked to her hereditary past and classical social bridge.

I return now to the opening passage reconstructed from my fieldnotes on the day we were welcomed as guests into a music community centred around Ananth, and now also Rija. Equally socialized in the hereditary milieu of a musical family, Ananth took on the operation of the Tyagaraja School of Music in Pannur to open a branch of his older brother's music school (of the same name), already well established in the larger centre of Kuthuparamba. His father was a professional nagasvaram player as well as a teyyam artist, and like Rija, Ananth cultivated a social bridge with a higher caste guru. Under the influence of his brothers, who also chose careers in music, his family left the profession of teyyam and now two sons occupy prominent positions as music educators in the midland areas of southern Kannur district. Judging by the number of children and adults present at our visit, the school appeared to be running at high enrolment at that time. Rija brings valuable capital as an accomplished performer and experienced teacher to the school, an addition that should also translate into even more students. Moreover, her continuing work in the public school system provides a steady income for their household to counter the unpredictable enrolment cycles at private music schools.

Although both Rija and Ananth have benefited from their Malayan hereditary background, they do not emphasize this part of their identity in the field of classical music education. The two musical worldviews may be integrated in practice, but publicly they are not easily reconciled in the process of navigating a social landscape still divided by caste prejudice and indignity, depending on the social frame in any given moment and place. This point was sharpened for me when Jitesh (Rija's brother) and I went for an excursion to teach me about the boundaries of his family's *ceṟujanmam*. Walking along a narrow pathway separating rice fields and coconut groves we came to a Nayar taṟavāṭŭ of a former landowning family in the area. Two men from the large dilapidated homestead came out to greet us and they walked with us along the path past their property for a while. During this stretch I overheard one of the men ask Jitesh what he does for a living (*jōli:* employment, job). Instead of answering that he works mainly as a teyyam performer, he emphasized his identity as a tabla instructor in Kathirur and decided not to disclose his Malayan hereditary status.

Rules for maximizing one's resources are always changing depending on the social situation. In the field of classical music, where the rules of interaction are still regulated by codes established by high-caste patronage (now adopted by the middle classes), foregrounding low-caste occupational affiliations is not an effective strategy for capturing more resources, contacts, or simply respect. Similarly, at the Tyagaraja School of Music it was a high-caste Nayar patron (his son was attending Ananth's classes) who was asked to speak and sit with us at the guest table. In part, Ananth's decision was based on the fact that Mr. Nayar could speak English fluently; however, inviting a high-caste patron to offer words of welcome to his foreign friends was also an important symbolic affirmation of the school's—and by extension his and Rija's—legitimacy in the public domain of Karnatic music education (fig. 22).

B. Revolutionary Musicians of Malabar

Kerala is well known for having been the first democracy to bring a communist government to power by the ballot box. In 1959, the Communist Party of India formed the first state government of Kerala, only to be dissolved 22 months later under the controversial pretence of mass civil unrest by the authority of the union government, controlled by the Indian National Congress under Jawaharlal Nehru. Conflict between these two powerful ideological juggernauts, one nationalist socialist and one Marxist-Leninist socialist, brought to the fore a schism that has shaped Kerala's political landscape since the communist movement broke away from the Congress fold in the

1930s (fig. 23). Explanations for the conditions that enabled early revolutionaries to organize, unify, and grow effectively at the grassroots level, range from the intensity of caste discrimination experienced in the kingdoms that divided the territory of pre-Independence Kerala, to the scale and nature of traditional industries, to the remarkably high levels of education. However, the general consensus maintains that the most significant socio-historical condition was the widespread custom of matriliny, or the passing of property and title through the female line (Jeffrey 1978; Nossiter 1982; Balakrishnan 1998). In the wake of the gradual dissolution of the matrilineal tradition during the early decades of the twentieth century, a generation of literate upper caste men turned towards new socialist ideologies in the face of a dramatic breakdown in the social system. Greatly influenced by communist activities in Britain, Russia and China, they became the leaders of the Communist Party of India in Kerala. Despite the popular participation in the freedom movement under Congress leadership in the decades before Independence (1947), many young educated men and women became disaffected with Congress policies and turned to more radical initiatives for change. The egalitarian ideas circulated by communist leaders found support among the poorest people of Kerala society, particularly the Dalit castes whose collective memories of generations of appalling discrimination underpinned their enthusiasm for profound agrarian and social change. This is the struggle that forms the background to the stories of revolutionary musicians featured below. The purpose of this section is to examine how these regional political dynamics influenced the musical and political lives of a Malayan joint-family in northern Malabar.

I begin this commentary on the life histories of a taṛavāṭŭ with an excerpt from an interview with the eldest of two brothers whose families were the main consultants during my visits to the village panchayat of Ramanthali in northern Kannur. We are seated on plastic chairs in the shade on the crowded porch of K.P.C. Panikkar's[47] modest red, mud-brick home. A veteran, senior political and teyyam leader, K.P.C. responds to my question about how he became involved with singing for the Communist Party of

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[47] The honorific Panikkar is awarded to a mature Malayan teyyam performer by prestigious temples attached to the former kingdom under whose authority the Malayan holds avakāśam. Usually it is given after the performer leaps into a large fire while mediating for Ottakkalam teyyam. An important distinction marking a key life-cycle event for men in the field of teyyam, the title is symbolized in material form by a golden bangle (*vaḷa*).

India (Marxist). The larger goal was to identify key moments, figures, and events in K.P.C.'s political history. The Vaidyar whom he refers to is a high-caste practitioner of the indigenous Ayurveda Indian system of healing and medicine. An important local communist leader and educator, Thamban Vaidyar was instrumental in instilling a sense of dignity, social justice, and political service in K.P.C.'s family. The story is told against the backdrop of caste conflict grafted onto violent struggles for ideological control of the state between the Congress and Communist parties in Post-Independence, democratic, northern Kerala.

April 6, 2004: K.P.C. Panikkar's home, Kunnaru, Kannur

> *As the lower caste people, me and my brother were those who have the inborn ability to sing. The Vaidyar called and asked my younger brother to sing a film song. On a paper, the Vaidyar wrote a political verse in the tune of a film song and asked him to sing. He was then taken to a stage organized by the Kunhimangalam Communist Party. Who? My younger brother, K.P.R. Panikkar. K.P.R. Panikkar, my younger brother, revolutionary singer.... From the stage, he sang the verses Thamban Vaidyar wrote to the tunes of film songs. When they heard that song being sung, many of the leaders (pramānimār) of Congress became angry.*
>
> *There was a person called M.V. Kōran Master. Now, he is our colleague and works with us. In the past it was not like that. In the past he walked through the country like an elephant. All in his group were like that ... like this person Kōran Master. I was busy with something when somebody came and told me that Kōran Master wanted to see me. I went to the shop where he was. When I entered, he was there sitting with the weight of his status. He demanded, "who sang on the stage of the communists at Kunhimangalam yesterday?" In a slow voice he repeated his question in a single breath, "Who"? At first I didn't respond. Finally, I replied in the language of the slave, "I was not the one." "Then who?," he retorted. In the low pitched manner that a Malayan is supposed to talk, I said, "my younger brother was the one who sang. My younger brother sang." He warned, "if it is heard that you or your brother sang on the stage of the communist after this, we will hang you up, tear your skin and rub salt in the wound." (K.P.C. Panikkar, April 2004, Kunnaru)*

Nani and the Lion's Voice: Mixing Music and Marx

In the above raw encounter with caste violence and political struggle, the little brother whom K.P.C refers to is the late K.P. Raman Panikkar, known throughout Kerala as the "lion's voice" of the Communist Party (Marxist).[48] His obituary published on the front page of a leftist daily reads: "K.P.R. Panikkar (age 67), famous revolutionary singer and prominent CPM worker, has passed away. … Without the use of musical instruments, K.P.R. Panikkar sang revolutionary songs and inspired thousands at Party public gatherings" (*Deshabhimani*, March 22, 2000). More than the text, the juxtaposition of his photo on the same page featuring a memorial tribute to the great communist leader, A.K. Gopalan, serves as an expression of the widespread high regard with which the Malayan revolutionary singer was held (see Appendix C). He is survived today by his wife Nani, two sons Suresh and Sunil, and daughter Ajitha. When asked to talk about their own life histories and that of their deceased father, the family began with stories of the dignity their grandmother and grandfather carried themselves with.

In the beginning, there were three brothers from the same taṟavāṭŭ at Kunhimangalam who were each given a territory (*ragiyangal*) in which they held the rights to provide midwifery and ritual services. One of the brothers, Raman Panikkar, came to Kunnaru, a village within the larger administrative area of Ramanthali and founded a new taṟavāṭŭ, Kaniyat Parambil.[49] Over the years, they became wealthier than most service castes, largely because of the payments brought into the home by Raman Panikkar's wife Cheriya's midwifery services provided for other castes in the area. In total, they had six children, including K.P.C. (Chandran) and K.P.R. (Raman), some of whom choose different career paths outside of the hereditary occupation and others, like Chandran and Raman, who remained committed to carrying on the family avakāśam. Pride and respect for the hereditary body of wisdom referred to collectively as *kulānusāstram* (lineage knowledge about healing, spirit-mediumship, sorcery, and midwifery) was thoroughly instilled in the next generation. What is remarkable about their parents' stories is the confidence and dignity they modelled, though not without conflict and adversity, as Suresh recalls:

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[48] Appendix B presents a short article written in a communist newspaper, *Gaddika* (March 21, 2000). The title reads: "K.P.R. Panikkar: A Roaring Lion of Revolutionary Songs."

[49] The taṟavāṭŭ name, Kaniyat Parambil, provides the first two initials for both brothers' names; Raman and Chandran are their given names. When referring to either one, most of the time the initials were included unless a kinship term was substituted by a family member.

> *Appappan [grandfather], at that time was a man of high wealth because he had lots of money in hand from Appamma's delivery services [grandmother's midwifery services]. He was a man who had earned a lot of money then. At that time the caste system was at its peak. He was a brave man who was afraid of no one. He was a man who resisted against the caste system. (March 28, 2004, Kunnaru)*

While there are a few distinguished Nambūtiri Brahmin families settled in the area, the higher caste that presented the strongest opposition to Malayan upward mobility was the Tiyya community. The Tiyya were dominant small-scale tenant cultivators in many regions where there were fewer Nayar taṟavāṭūs. This being the case in Ramanthali, they exercised considerable power and influence over the service providing castes beneath them on the scale of ritual purity. Raman's sons, Suresh and Sunil, comment on the tension between their family, particularly *Appappan* (grandfather Raman), and Tiyya landlords:

> SURESH: The Tiyya community was dominant. They tortured our family a lot. At that time they cared less for Appappan's attitude. That anger is there in their mind. But they couldn't live without depending on us. I mean, my Appamma had to go to deal with their wives' delivery cases. So they couldn't avoid us completely. Such a problem exists between us.
>
> SUNIL: They could neither acknowledge us, nor help not to acknowledge us.

During Appappan's time, the teyyam festival would have been an important arena for releasing the tension between the dominant caste of Tiyya families and the lower service and agricultural castes in the area.[50]

Indeed, one of the important functions of the teyyam ritual event was to provide an occasion for voicing subaltern criticism of high-caste abuses of power, while at the same time legitimizing the high status of landed patrons of the kāvŭs. After the teyyam dances, he or she moves about the compound making proclamations in the manner of a king (*aruḷappāṭŭ*), during which phase, disputes between different families or castes and complaints would be addressed and redressed by the teyyam in the presence of the ruling families of the land (Ashley and Holloman 1990; Tarabout 2005). Moreover, the tōṯṯam songs also communicate forceful allegorical messages to indirectly express the discontent of oppressed castes and remind patrons of their responsibility to model compassionate conduct towards fellow human beings according to the will of God (Pallath 1995; Rajesh Komath, pers. comm.).

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[50] Here I invoke Srinivas' concept of the dominant caste in multi-caste rural villages: "A caste may be said to be 'dominant' when it preponderates numerically over the other castes, and when it also wields preponderant economic and political power" (1959:1). Even though the Tiyya caste is relatively low (ex-untouchable) in the greater socio-religious order structuring Malabar Hindu society, locally, due to the absence of Nayar settlements, they enjoyed higher standing.

A quintessential example of a form of oblique symbolic protest is the tōṯṯam song for Poṭṭan (literally "fool") teyyam, a manifestation of Shiva disguised as an untouchable. The story recounts how the great Medieval Kerala sage, Shankaracharya, was on his way to northern India to take his seat as the most knowledgeable spiritual leader, when suddenly Shiva appears in front of his path. He proceeds to teach Shankaracharya lesson about the evils of the caste system and the essential unity of all humanity. Taken from a version of the song I heard performed by Jitesh in Kotayam panchayat near Kuthuparamba in Kannur district, the following excerpt captures the allegorical use of metaphor that the untouchable uses to persuade Shankaracharya:

> A Valōn [boatman] calls from the other side.
> The boat crosses.
> These five elements are necessary for life.
> They help to cross rivers.
> You also cross using the same boat.
> You didn't see water inside the boat.
> In that way we are the same.
> Why do you make differences between our communities.
>
> You broke the coconut that we gave you.
> Did you see the water after it was broken?
> It is the same.
> You are offering God the banana that is cultivated at our dwelling place
> In that way we are the same.
> Why do you make differences between our communities.
>
> You are offering a garland with tulasi which we cultivated at our place.
> You eat betel leaf, we eat *allikkāyu* [a different type of leaf].
> We are both chewing.

> In that way we are the same.
> Why do you make differences between our communities.
>
> You use elephants for processions.
> We use bulls.
> You're applying sandalwood paste on your body
> We get mud.
> In that way we are the same.
> Why do you make differences between our communities.
>
> You use gold as ornaments.
> We use *kanni* (another kind of leaf).
> In that way we are the same.
> Why do you make differences between our communities.

One of the most popular teyyams, Poṭṭan demonstrates how rituals were critical sites for articulating resistance through means other than violence within asymmetrical power relations between communities.[51]

Today, the role of Malayan as mediators in the form of deities has declined with less demand from devotees to address village quarrels in the kāvŭ arena. The courts now have the monopoly over conflict resolution and keeping the peace, a legacy that began with the establishment of a modern British legal system by colonial authorities. However, teyyam rituals remain highly political, as opposing political parties compete for control over the administration and spatial authority of local temples. In some cases, attempts were even made to appropriate the artistic forms and practices of the ritual to recode them with political meanings (Ashley 1993). The Communist Party of India (Marxist) (CPM) in particular, have explored the possibility of recontextualizing teyyam as a theatrical propaganda tool in the late 70s and early 80s. Leaders believed that the religion of teyyam re-enacted exploitative neo-feudal social relations between downtrodden producer castes and aristocratic or bourgeois non-producers who lived off the fruits of working class labour, and consequently, they sought to lift it out of the ritual context to restage it as a folk art protest genre. In 1981, the party became involved in an acrimonious public dispute after an affiliated Kannur-based theatre company produced a play based on the myth and performance of Muccilōṭṭŭ Bhagavati, a Goddess associated with a particular caste (*kuladaivam*) of oil pressers (*Vāṇiyar*) mediated by the *Vaṇṇan* performing caste. Angered by the blatant disregard of local folklorists, dramatists, and poets for the sacred significance of the story and ritual, the community protested and eventually their state-wide caste association took the issue to court (Ashley 1982).

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[51] See Trawick (1988) for a neighbouring account of symbolic resistance among Dalits in Tamil Nadu.

In the 1990s, the Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) began to expand into the state and the militant wing of the movement (Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh) set its sights on teyyam as a powerful vehicle for fanning Hindu fundamentalist sentiment. Recognizing the failure to eradicate teyyam as a religion, and forced to accept the continuing prominence of the ritual in Hindu popular religious life, the Marxists shifted strategies towards insulating their hold on grassroots political culture by maintaining an active supportive (ideological and financial) presence around teyyam festivals. In the evolution of political power jockeying in Malabar, many Malayan families have opted to remain neutral in public, claiming “they don’t have politics,” since depending on the political power structure in their ceṟujanmam they could jeopardize their livelihood. Other families, like the taṟavāṭṭŭ founded at Kunnaru by Suresh and Sunil’s brave Appappan—“have politics,” as exemplified by their history of unwavering service and support for the CPM. The question is, how has the family employed their hereditary musicality to this end?

Malayan participate in political life musically at three types of occasions: performing arts events (sponsored by parties), rallies, and recording studios. In each one of these overlapping domains, Malayan may be hired (if they are not party members) or invited (if they are members) to play instruments (especially ceṇṭa), compose music, or perform songs to attract support (votes), communicate ideological positions, or express political territorial ambitions. Evidence of the collaborative relationship between theatre and politics, briefly discussed above in connection with the CPM teyyam incident, is found in all districts of the state, and naturally many Malayan have been involved in local drama companies with political associations, including the Kunnaru family. Kerala’s long tradition of using satire in street theatre to engage in social commentary, famously embodied in the popular *ōṭṭan tuḷḷal* dance-drama, came together with modern socialist ideals with the first performance of the classic play, “You Made me a Communist,” by the Kerala People’s Arts Club in 1951. From that point on, modern political theatre became a powerful force in the state's cultural scene, both in the street and on the stage. Commenting on the street, K.P.C. adds:

> *Street theatre has a lot of relevance for contemporary politics and it was used a lot [in the past]. ... In street theatre, they once depicted Murali, the son of Karanakkaran [former Congress Chief Minister of Kerala], as a buffoon. "Father I want that..." [with a satirical tone of voice] and the people would clap their hands. Street theatre is very useful for the transient aspects of politics (kṣaṇikamāya rāṣṭrīyam: momentary politics of the day). (April 7, 2004, Kunnaru)*

For these political events ceṇṭa players would announce the start of the performance before hand as well as hold the attention of the audience in between acts. Moreover, singing and oratory would also be vital areas in which Malayan were and continue to be well equipped to contribute. This is substantiated by the Kunnaru family's account of how Appappan, the grandfather, was an actor and musician for a group specializing in (*caviṭṭunāṭukam*) musical plays, a tradition once common throughout Southern India.

More importantly, though, the family in Kunnaru is famous for singing at political rallies, ranging from private regular meetings to large gatherings and processions at the time of elections. K.P. Raman's obituary (mentioned above) highlights his remarkably active career in this area. Throughout his period of service to the party, which began with the famous scene recounting how an invitation for him to sing at a CPM meeting incited the wrath of a local Congress leader, he composed and performed songs all over Kerala and in other states as well, including as a musical delegate of the Kerala branch of the party in the Punjab. The creative process typically involved collaborating with a writer who would provide texts that he would then set to simple tunes in the style of Malayali cinema music, some of which would be newly composed while others drew from popular melodies. The practice of intertextuality in the setting of new text to old tunes is common in Kerala's political arena, and throughout the Subcontinent (Manuel 1993:115). Commonly known as "parody songs," parties find the most popular (usually cinema) tunes of the day and hire musicians to sing them with new lyrics criticizing the platforms of other parties and ridiculing opposition candidates. The effectiveness of this musical strategy is acknowledged by one daily newspaper when it foreshadows the success of a CPM candidate (part of the Left Democratic Front, LDF) from Kannur in the 2004 Lok Sabha (lower house of the Indian parliament) election in a reference to songs: "The LDF campaign machinery makes good use of parody songs to banter the new-found unity in the Congress" (*The Hindu*, April 24, 2004). An exceptional artist in this creative process, K.P. Raman forged a distinguished career of political service with a hereditary musicality owing to many seasons of teyyam ritual practice. But just as his father resisted persecution in clashes with dominant high castes of the village, K.P. Raman came up against formidable opposition forces as a result of his singing.

It was an inopportune time to be a famous communist singer when Congress Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi, declared a state of Emergency in 1975 and suspended all civil liberties. Kerala was subsequently administered through direct Congress rule from the centre, and consequently, police were ordered to intimidate and imprison opposition leaders and other critics of the central government. Because of his involvement with the communist party, K.P. Raman went into hiding with his older brother, K. P. Chandran, to evade attacks from Congress supporters who took advantage of the tacit approval of violence against dissidents given by central authorities. Eventually, however, he was arrested and incarcerated for over a year in a penitentiary at Kannur town, during which time life at home became increasingly difficult. Besides not having enough food, the family lived in constant fear of reprisals because of their public affiliation with the CPM. Still a painful memory to revisit several decades later, the event points to the impact of a different kind of musical efficacy than Malayan use for teyyam. While from the perspective of his fellow "comrades" (*sakhăvŭ*), K.P. Raman was first a party worker, then a singer, it was ultimately his musical work for the party that made him a prime target for persecution during the Indian Emergency (1975-1977).

Judging from the description of his musical achievements in politics, it would appear K.P. Raman stood alone on stage as the "lion's voice" of the CPM. Yet one of the most intriguing aspects of his life history was the insistence and encouragement with which he convinced his wife Nani, also a skilled singer in the Mālayan tradition, to take the stage by his side. One of few women who were taught how to sing tōṯṯam and other ritual songs, she would have already had experience singing in front of large crowds at the annual teyyam festivals. Her participation is of special interest in light of the general decline in women's musical involvement in teyyam rituals, starting with Nani's generation born near the time of Indian Independence (1947). Most Malayan women of this period and subsequent generations turned away from their traditional supportive singing role in teyyam as part of a broader pattern of hereditary musical women withdrawing from traditional settings, thereby imitating high-caste norms of modesty to raise their family's status in society (Post 1987:98).[52] Not only did Nani choose not to follow this path in continuing to perform tōṯṯam, but she also undertook four years of Karnatic voice training under a high-caste guru. Seizing the opportunity provided by her husband's established position as a singer-activist in political fields of musical production, she sang with him at rallies and especially in recording studios.

To appreciate the context in which Nani and her husband K.P. Raman Panikkar sang, it is useful to briefly sketch an important musical shift in the public sphere. Parallel to the establishment of the All India Radio in the 1930s was a growing popular music culture boosted by the success of the film industry based in Mumbai and other regional centres. Drawing from an eclectic range of music sources for setting syncretic textures of accompaniment to new styles of singing, the popularity of the media-driven movement fundamentally changed audience listening sensibilities. Commenting on the impact this had on Karnatic music style in Kerala, Nandakumar cogently states: "… the new habits of music reception and listening in the context of classical music was formed largely in an environment of the literate-media sensibility and the attitude that goes with it which, in turn, were informed by the perceptual habits in the context of the 'new sound' that is synonymous with popular music" (1999:252). One feature of the new sound she refers to is the turn towards giving more prominence to voice quality rather than virtuosity. In chapter three I highlighted how timbral quality represents a key stylistic tool used to evoke *bhāva* (expression) in Malayan ritual music, a fact that suggests that it would be easier for Malayan to succeed in vocal idioms that involve less virtuosity in favour of tone colour. As cinema and light music genres became standardized in societal consciousness through the radio and later the regional Kerala film industry, Malayan became increasingly proficient in venues that were established in the wake of these shifts in musical taste, including at radio studios and gānamēḷa (orchestra) public concerts.[53] The advent of a decentralized "democratic-participant" recording medium in the form of cassette technology (Manuel 1993) further entrenched Malayan interest in pursuing careers (or leisure) in highly mediatized fields. The appropriation of these musical media and stylistic idioms by political parties must be understood in the context of a broader transformation in the way Keralites experience music in the public sphere. This transformation is captured by the title, "Kerala Sound Electricals," from a recent Ph.D. thesis investigating the pervasiveness of amplified sound in Malabar public space (Karel 2003).

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[52] Situated within a particular pattern of gender relations characteristic of Dalit (ex-untouchable) ritual service communities, Malayan women performers are in many way not easily compared with the social history of professional classical women performers (including the northern secular courtesan tradition and southern religious devadasi lineages) who belonged to higher classes in Indian society. First of all, the latter were not considered untouchable, whereas Malayan women were still wearing nothing (or a white cloth) over their upper bodies until the generation preceding Nani's in observance of high-caste laws enforcing restricted codes of dress on untouchable communities to mark their segregated status (Men were not allowed to lower their *mundus* pass the knee in the presence of a higher caste person). Still, both strata of women music specialists were stigmatized for their immodest display of embodied performance in traditional (as opposed to modern) public settings. Thus the movement of all classes of hereditary women away from stigmatized milieus does appear to fit within a common frame of reference at some level.

Keeping this technological revolution in mind, there appear to be two types of songs that political parties use to communicate with listening audiences: songs to boost member solidarity and songs directed at external audiences, including opposition parties as well as potential voters and supporters. In the latter case, the most common textual strategy is parody, whereby lyrics ridiculing a target group or individual are applied to old tunes, which in this case may include common folk songs or more typically, *sinemapāṭṭukal* (cinema songs). Commenting on the widespread use of parody in folk music traditions throughout North India, Manuel offers an explanation:

> If the usage of stock or borrowed tunes is familiar in light-classical music, it is virtually ubiquitous in most North Indian folk music. It may be state … that most Indian folk music places primary emphasis on the text, so that the quality or originality of the melody (*tarz, dhun*), and, in many cases, the competence of its rendition, are not the most important aesthetic criteria. (1993:133)

Considering the prominence of timbre and voice quality underlined above, it seems justifiable to modify Manuel's statement, which stresses importance of the text, by adding that articulation and expression are also features valued by listeners aesthetically; going further, it seems tenable to claim that they give songs their evocative force.

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[53] Appendix D shows a poster advertising a gānamēḷa concert featuring members of the Kunnaru Malayan family. Suresh is pictured second in the top row and Sunil's photo is first in the bottom row. The young Malayan woman whose image fills most of the poster is Suresh and Sunil's cousin.

Textually speaking, however, Manuel's points is well illustrated by the appropriation of the hit Malayalam cinema song, "Lajjavathiye" ("Shy Girl") from the movie *4 the People*, written by music director Jassy Gift. During the 2004 Lok Sabha (lower house of the Indian Parliament) elections, all three main political parties (CPM, Congress, and the BJP) set to their lyrics to the tune at rallies. Thus, while text matters, it is also crucial to recall that music is the vehicle that delivers the message in the process of amplifying territorial claims and politicizing allegiances.

Whether in the back of a jeep holding a microphone hooked up to a speaker system mounted on top, or standing on a stage at a political gathering, K.P. Raman Panikkar and Nani were powerful weapons and instruments for the Marxist movement in northern Kerala. Even today, Nani continues to record songs. She most recently finished a memorial cassette featuring her husband's most popular hits, a performance she led with her two sons and daughter by her side. Both Suresh and Sunil continue to offer their musical services to the CPM, and judging by the hereditary and non-hereditary musical accomplishments of Suresh's young son, Nikhil (fig. 19), it seems likely that he too will soon join them on stage, in the back of a vehicle, or in the studio—perhaps as early as the next election.

Two Fields of Malayan Authenticity: Ritualizing Politics and Politicizing Ritual

K.P. Chandran Panikkar's musical involvement in politics concentrated more on building solidarity within the Communist Party of India (Marxist) in contrast with his younger brother's focus on outreach political activities. His tremendous leadership and oratory skills helped him ascend the ranks of the Party organizational hierarchy, moving from the status of member, to organizer, to Ramanthali Panchayat Vice President. He also extended his reputation for being a charismatic effective organizer into the organizational structures that form the interface between the Scheduled Tribes and Castes (ST and SC) and the government, eventually becoming the state leader for the SC and ST association.

Despite a long list of painful memories of upper caste oppression and a thorough Marxist-Leninist education under the Party's supervision, he never turned away from his duty as *janmari* (fig. 24). Not even when a high caste barred him from a kāvŭ because of his political activities, did he reject the hereditary occupation of his ancestors. When a local Congress-dominated temple committee suspended his right to perform *Oṯṯakkōlam* teyyam and receive the important honorific title of Panikkar, the Party awarded him the title in their own ceremony. In the face of such incidents of caste oppression, K.P.C.'s tenacity and resiliency persevered and in recent years he helped organize Malayan and Vaṇṇan performers into what is essentially a union under the banner of the Malabar Association of Teyyam Artists (MATA). Besides advocating pressure tactics (strikes during which time ritual services are withheld) to ensure that artists are paid fairly and treated well for their services, an important mandate of the union is to rise up against temple committees that break their ancestors' hereditary responsibility to recognize the avakāśam (rights to provide service) of teyyam families, and ostracize those artists that usurp the rights of others by replacing them. Concerned that CPM tactics were being used to strengthen neo-feudal social relations and caste divisions, the Party officially warned him to curb is advocacy work with the SC and ST association and his union activities with MATA. He resigned rather than give up his social commitments to other Dalit communities and his own ancestral tradition.

Throughout his career as a teyyam performer and Party organiser K.P.C. did his best to reconcile ritual and political orientations. Though in the above account the two forces collided, at other times they coexisted easily, for example in his childhood years when the Party provided a source of strength and support during periods of low wages in the ritual field when teyyam work declined due to lack of affluent patronage. Or, the two fields merged when teyyam festivals were revived due to the influx of capital from Hindus working abroad in the Persian Gulf, creating a trend among upwardly mobile families to articulate new status through public displays of religious patronage (Osella and Osella 2000). As teyyam festivals were increasingly revived, political parties sought ways of penetrating the sacred arena to expand their ideological scope, including appropriating the craft of its primary agents, the performers. The communist party's interest in K.P.C.'s hereditary toolkit, including musicality, oratory, and persuasive conversational arts (part of learning how to embody the God through speech), is an example of the possibility of integrating ritual capabilities with political principles and praxis. On the art of conversation, K.P.C. narrates an example of the kind of exchange (*anughraha sambhāṣaṇam*: lit. blessing conversation) a teyyam would have with a devotee in distress while giving out blessings:

> *The conversations take the pulse of the [devotee's] overflow of emotions like a psychological approach... "are you experiencing great sorrows?" Then, the fellows [devotee] says that he is suffering from great stress. [The teyyam replies in a high pitched voice:] "Though you've been in the fire to your waist, I saved you without making your hairy legs fade. Isn't that true" [the person responds in a low, soft voice:] "Yes, Paradēvata." In that way, dressed in artistic attire, Teyyam is the judge in these two localities. Teyyam finds remedy for many problems in the temple.*

His account illustrates the link between heightened speech capabilities and effective and compassionate Party organization. Moreover, it is interesting to consider the above passage in light of an earlier statement in the above interview about the need to recruit new members to the Party fold with beauty, empathy, and benevolence as opposed to violence. Like the charismatic motherly or fatherly appeal of teyyam, the CPM aims to touch the hearts and souls of the community, making organisers like K.P.C. invaluable "comrades" indeed.

On the subject of revolutionary songs (*viplavagānam*), K.P.C. draws a telling distinction between those Malayan who sing "with politics," and those who sing without it. The difference appears to hinge on two pivotal points. First, the way he describes how one should sing as a revolutionary—someone who "has politics" (Marxist in this case)—closely resembles how Malayan talk about the active sonic beauty required to awaken the śakti of the teyyam in the body of the *kōlakkāran*. Recall that a tōṯṯam singer must create the appropriate expression (*bhāva*) and character at particular moments in the festival and in accordance with the identity (character, likes, and dislikes) of the teyyam called into the body. Malayan often use the English word "boost" to describe what the evocative force of song is intended to accomplish. Similarly, when one is singing in a serious idiom of political expression, the correct mood must be established regardless where the tunes come from. It is essentially situational in practice, which is to say that the same tune sung in two separate occasions can have totally different effects on listeners and the identity of the performer. The proof lies in the creative practice of borrowing cinema song tunes to use in totally different contexts. Given a different text and quality of expression, the tune takes on new vitality as an instrument capable of politicizing fellow "comrades," a process that could also be termed ritualizing politics, considering the extent of the conceptual continuity between the two arenas from K.P.C.'s standpoint. In his words:

> *If you consider music as labour (toḻil), without politics, you can sing on many stages (vēdi). But that's not politics. It is music. With politics, can the Congressman sing on the stage of a Communist? If it is as labour, singing can be done without the touch (sparśikkuka) of politics. With singing in politics, the particular principles (āshayankal), revolutionary characteristics (viplavam), should be there. One of the songs that I sing... [rapidly recites lyrics to one of the songs he sings; the theme is peasants demanding ownership of the land on which they work]. (April 7, 2004, Kunnaru)*

This account suggests that there is a key concept of authenticity operative in political and ritual arenas, which brings to mind Turino's work on Peircian semiotics. For our discussion here, it is enough to consider two types of signs Turino identifies as critical for understanding how authenticity works in conjunction with affect, music, and identity: "rhemes" and "dicents" (1999). Before explaining further, it is useful to remember that in addition to the Saussurian binary distinction between the sign (signifier) and its object (signified), a Peircian perspective on how meaning is produced and experienced adds a third dimension to the process of semiosis, the effect of a sign on a perceiver. For Turino, this third dimension, which Peirce labelled the "interpretant," is key to illuminating the evocative force of music—"that mammoth realm of human experience that falls outside language-based thinking and communication" (1999:221). Of the many possible relationships between the sign, object, and interpretant, Turino's theory is primarily concerned with two ways in which the interpretant (representation in perceiver's mind) recognizes how a sign is related to its object. First, rhemes imply imaginary connections that are not necessarily taken at face value. They are signs of potential, but not actual, links between a sign and its object. Dicents, in contrast, stem from an indexical mode of association whereby the sign is understood to be directly effecting its object through co-occurrence, wind and a weathervane, or stove and heat, for example. Moreover, dicents, unlike language and rhemes (imagined possibilities) are perceived as being actual because their realization depends on an experiential moment in real time where a sign is perceived to act on an object, thereby producing a particular effect in the form of an interpretant. How does this connect with K.P.C. Panikkar's dichotomy separating music with "no politics" and music "as politics"?

When Keralites listen to cinema songs they are drawn into an imaginary world of heroes, heroines, and villains with all the plots and intrigues that are conjured up as a result of having watched the film on television or at the local movie theatre beforehand. The association is purely dramatic in that everyone knows these are just actors performing a story, the sign-relations mirroring real life rather than constituting it. It is a special kind of power of suggestion that rhemes exercise in the interpretant, which Turino notes, is deeply involved in the creative process of art (ibid.:238). The same gist is captured in the following excerpt from K.P.C.'s talk on the relationship between music and politics:

> *Sometime when I do organizational work for scheduled castes and tribes, when I am speaking at a public podium, those representatives who know about my singing abilities ask me to sing. It's not politics, is it? In that moment, it's cinema songs. [Sings a line:]"In front is emptiness, darkness" .... as sung by Satyan [famous Malayali actor]. That's not politics, that's just singing cinema songs. (April 7, 2004, Kunnaru)*

It is ironic that K.P.C. refers to Satyan as the singer of the song since Satyan would have been the actor, not the playback singer who lent his voice to Satyan's character. Clearly, K.P.C. is pointing to the same type of affect generated by an imaginary relationship between the sign and its object, a rheme. Conversely, when K.P.C. sings about landless labourers, dispossession, social justice, and other key realms of experience confronted by Marxist politics, he is singing with intent to envelop his listening audience in a more personal experiential sound environment. In this situation, music operates like a dicent because K.P.C. is singing as himself, a passionate Dalit leader who has lived through most of the experiences he sings about. His identity merges collective and personal experience in the process of enlisting hereditary musicality to illicit emotional responses from his audience, affectively creating and reaffirming the larger relationship that bonds them together under the banner of social justice. It seems to me that tōṯṯam singing operates the same way, with an important difference being that the first audience is the deity incarnate. Just as the authenticity of the Party depends on effective and compelling musical dicents, so does faith in teyyam depend on genuine active sonic beauty.

In bringing this section on the political field of production to a close, it is important to give K.P.Chandran the last word. As he finishes narrating the story that began with the belligerent Congress leader and his brother's experience singing on stage, it becomes increasingly apparent who was at the other end of the social bridge that raised him to a platform where he applied his hereditary music sensibility to become a well-respected Party organizer and social activist. Nurtured through various stages by the Marxist Party, his career could be viewed as an example of how a powerful ideological machinery appropriated ritual forms to serve its ends, attempting to wean the bearer off the tradition off feudal patronage in the process. Yet when higher Party authorities insisted that he leave his feudal teyyam identity out of the unionization movement, he refused, reconciling the conflict by invoking the responsibility to uphold the practice out of respect and admiration for his ancestors, a powerful diplomatic response difficult for any Keralite, Communist or otherwise, to seriously refute. In other words, K.P.C. was the agent of his political and ritual career, making tactical decisions to use his hereditary assets out of loyalty to an ideology he believes rescued his family from what must have been a childhood exposed to horrible indignities, acts of caste violence and oppression. But later when his political career gathered momentum he increased his level of social, cultural and economic capital—for example, in the form of contacts, opportunities to gain recognition and prestige for performances at high status venues, and modest employment opportunities—and set out to politicize the ritual he embodies in an effort to improve conditions for his kin relations and future Malayan generations. He achieved this by establishing a performers union and by training younger generations in both the musical arts of teyyam and the politics of dignity.

To reach this point, however, there had to be a social bridge, someone who was well positioned within the political field of production at a time when a younger K.P.C. was confined to the ritual arena with little capital or status. That person was a high-caste Vaidyar Ayurvedic doctor. What appears to have had the most impact on K.P.C. is the way the Vaidyar transgressed caste norms of untouchability, the belief that pollution from lower castes is contagious through distance, touch, and especially food. From the outset of his encounter with Thamban Vaidyar, K.P.C. is told not to use verbal markers for differentiating status, an act that leaves him feeling confused, even disoriented. The fact that the Vaidyar encourages K.P.C. to sing, indicates that the man is well aware of the Malayan family's exceptional musicality. The story continues where the first part (above) left off:

> *In my mind there was a seed of progressive strength. Like in the Malayans' ornaments. Though [I was] a Malayan, in my mind, there was a seed of a revolutionary which breaks all these [threats] (determined tone of voice). I couldn't sleep that night. I couldn't sleep because of this threat. I woke up in the morning and went to Thambān Vaidyar.*
>
> *He said: "Ah, why have you come?,"*
>
> *I answered (in a softer tone): "I have come to see Vaidyarachan."*
>
> *[The Vaidyar answers:] If that is so, we must change something first. "I should be called Vaidyare [more familiar term implying equivalence between the speakers].*
>
> *Then, I was in a dilemma. [He] shouldn't be called like that. A Malayan cannot call like that [use that term of address]. Kannachan, Kōrachan—only by using this "achan" [father] can we address [higher castes]. [He] made me call him "Vaidyavu," and asked:*
>
> *"Why have you come?"*
>
> *"I don't know what this politics is (very low voice). I don't know what politics is. I feel like studying politics a little.*
>
> *"Oh! That is such a great thing! (exclamatory voice). Ah, we can study," he said.*
>
> *I talked about the subject and I sang lots of songs. While I was singing all those songs (in a low voice), he put his hand on my shoulder. He had a beautiful nature, the good eyes of a Simhalan (Malayalam term for Sri Lankan), hair like that of a saint (sanyāsi), and also a beard. He put his hand over my shoulder. I felt thrilled. Me, who belonged to the lower caste... he touched my shoulders while talking. He touched my shoulders (thrilled tone). Then, I was inspired by him.*
>
> *Then he told me to come in to his house and have some porridge! I said,*
>
> *"No, I'll wait to have some at home." (low voice)*
>
> *"Why? Won't you have porridge from here?"*
>
> *" No. I don't..." (very low pitch)*
>
> *"Ah, wash your hands" (commanding voice)*
>
> *In the plate, porridge and a curry was served. Vaidyar was also served there. Both of us ate (low voice). After having eaten, I moved to wash my plate. Isn't that our habit? Not only do we have to wash our plate, but we have to rub where we have eaten also. When I was about to take the vessel, Vaidyar said:*

> *"Put it there" (commanding tone). "Don't take that with you. Place it there" (low voice).*
>
> *At that moment his wife came to take the rest of the food. I felt revolutionary. I felt changed (high voice). The food I ate was taken by the Thīnsan, [the higher caste] which Thambān Vaidyar's wife belonged to. She took my "rest" in a way which I never saw or heard of in my life. The thinking power in his mind was progressive power... I was very inspired. I became Thambān Vaidyar's disciple. (April 6, 2004, Kunnaru)*

C. Touristic Borderzones: Integrating Service, Labour, and Artistry

Music—from recordings to live performances—is ubiquitous at most interactive tourism arenas around the world. Whether musical idioms animate the background as part of destination branding strategies or serve as cultural centrepieces in their own right, they constitute an invaluable resource for tourism marketing and product development (Atkinson 1997; Connell and Gibson 2003). The world music recording series' launched in the late 90s by multinational travel media giants, *National Geographic* and *Rough Guides*, suggests the demand for encounters with local soundscapes is on the rise. Even though literature on music and tourism is growing, few studies deal specifically with the impact of the industry on musicians,[54] and even fewer explore the reverse: how musicians imagine new identities to improve their socio-economic standing through participation in tourism development.

Instead, work in the social sciences has concentrated on the agency of the tourist gaze[55] (Urry 1990) and the cultural fallout incurred when protocols governing the use of expressive forms are not followed. A fundamental condition empowering tourist sensoria is access to mobility, literally and figuratively, a freedom which is in part accentuated by its opposite, the presumed immobility and "unfreedom" of the toured. The assumption that tourists are mobile and the "toured" are not, underpins much research focussed on the impacts of asymmetrical power relations in the developing world. Arguing we need to take the agency of the "toured" more seriously, this section draws from a case study of

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[54] Two leading exceptions in this area include Sarkissian (2000) and Rees (2000).

[55] I prefer the less visually-biased "tourist sensorium," however, the concept of the "gaze" following Urry's 1990 publication, *The Tourist Gaze*, has wide currency in tourism studies.

M.T. Manoharan to show how disadvantaged musicians exploit opportunities for mobility created by tourism. Engaging performers as active stakeholders working to maximize economic and symbolic returns for their families, his story demonstrates how new identities are necessarily rooted in pre-existing social orientations.

March 8, 2004, morning: Tāttān Marudi Kshētram, Kunnaru

While waiting for the Goddess to come into the compound I notice the kurum kuḷal player appears to have time to talk. I introduce myself near the aṇiyaṟa and he tells me his name is Manoharan; he is tall and slim compared to the other kōlakkāran, with short hair and a thick dark moustache. After talking for some time, he mentions that he played in France last April; the person who organized the tour was a man named Raveendran Nair, which confirms that he was a member of the same troupe that I watched perform a version of teyyam at Alliance française in Thiruvananthapuram last March.

We sit down to talk some more, since he seems pleased to discuss his performances abroad. The travel agency that booked their ticket was located in Kannur, but it was a French woman who arranged everything; they performed around thirty programs in different French cities; he can't recall names but they are all listed on programs at home; Ravi paid him in one lump sum at the end of the tour—around Rs. 20 000 [$480 CAD]; all other expenses were paid, and he emphasizes that they were treated very well.

Curious about how much interaction he had with French audiences, I ask him about this, and he replies that there was a language problem so it was impossible to have conversations; still, he felt happy with the way that French people appeared to appreciate and acknowledge his musical capabilities. However, he explains that they couldn't perform the ritual like this [looking at the teyyam ceremony unfolding in front of us] because they had to fit it in a limited time slot. At first it was one hour, but later the whole thing had to be completed in thirty minutes. He adds that there were other Kerala performing artists participating in the tour, including specialists in mōhiniyāṭṭam, *bharatanaṭyam, kaḷarippayaṯṯu, and katakaḷi—all mainly from Kalamandalam [Kerala Performing Arts Institution].*

Expanding Ritual Service to Global Artistry

Mobility for agricultural labourers and service communities in feudal Kerala was severely restricted. By royal decree, Malayan families were allowed to cultivate small parcels of land for subsistence in exchange for performing ritual services according to rights and duties inherited through the father's line called avakāśam. A family's jurisdiction over a network of shrines within a geographical area was known as the *ceṟujanmam*. In addition to receiving a service tenure to use land, payment for rituals was mainly in the form of shares in the harvest. Interaction with other Malayan lineages was infrequent since Dalit castes were prohibited from using main roads and certain paths to protect higher castes from distance pollution.

That was the situation then. Now, Kerala is the most socially progressive state in India, having realized substantial progress in education, health, and grassroots political participation. Yet despite being widely touted as a model for development (Jeffrey 1992; Sen 1999), especially for health and literacy, the state's failure to attract large-scale industrialization and decline in agricultural production has resulted in extremely high levels of unemployment and underemployment. Consequently, since the mid-1980s governments have aimed to capitalize on the state's main asset, skilled labour. One sector predicted to have substantial growth potential and demand for an educated work force was tourism. Concentrating on the region's rich cultural heritage, beautiful scenery, and Ayurvedic health benefits, the state established the Kerala Tourism Development Corporation in 1986 and increased patronage for cultural training and research institutions (Ayappan 1991; Daugherty 2000).

Kerala's most telling sign of success came with its inclusion as one of the 50 places to visit in a lifetime in a special 1999 issue of *National Geographic Traveler*. Other articles appeared in *National Geographic* (1999, 2001) and the French *GEO* (1997) in the same period, and the travel media corporation, Lonely Planet, released a Kerala guidebook in 2000. Remaining well above the national average, statistics reflect this trend with the number of foreign tourists soaring from a modest 69, 309 in 1991, to 208, 830 in 2001(Government of Kerala 2002), mainly coming from Britain, Germany, Israel, France, and the United States. In a recent move to diversify and expand the industry into the northern region, the government launched a campaign to promote tourism in Malabar. The most prominent icon of the brand shift was a fully-adorned teyyam performer. Significantly, this was the first time a Dalit ritual was selected to symbolize the state's rich cultural heritage along side the classical *katakaḷi* dance-drama. What was previously stigmatized as an archaic "devil dancing" ritual performed by "untouchables," was resignified by high caste cultural specialists and local entrepreneurs as a rare folk ritual art form. As a result, interactions with high status intermediaries and foreign tourists have steadily influenced how Malayans express and conceptualize their identity.

Of the three types of venues where tourists encounter teyyam and vice-versa, cultural festivals in urban settings and programmes at seaside resorts owned by expensive hotel groups are the most common. For these occasions performers are hired by public and private intermediary agencies to stage presentations of the ritual in a short timeframe lasting anywhere between 15 minutes and two hours. Typically, a high caste organizer interprets the performance for an audience comprised of foreign, domestic and local tourists, most of whom leave the spectacle without a sense of its sacred import. In contrast with this approach, a recent movement aimed at bringing small groups of tourists to witness teyyam in its religious setting at kāvūs (small temples with sacred groves) in Kannur district was initiated by cultural authorities and entrepreneurs in the late 90s.[56] Permission from temple committees to attend is obtained by guides usually affiliated with the hotel, and tourists briefly move through the crowds observing parts of rituals that extend over three-day periods. Commenting on the authenticity of experiencing the ritual among devotees under a lush canopy of greenery and scented wild flowers at shrines lit primarily with burning torches, a prominent cultural figure insisted that "teyyam is not only a place, it is a culture… people are part of teyyam" (K. K. Marar, May 2004, Thalassery).

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[56] Appendix E presents a tourist map designed to help orient visitors interested in experiencing teyyam rituals in religious context.

However, from performers' perspectives, financial gain and recognition is less in this situation, as donations received from tourists go to temple committees that control the ritual venues. Moreover, the neo-feudal relations enacted at these sacred sites are hierarchically determined and since performers are near the bottom in the scheme, they do not enjoy the respect given to artists in secular contexts. The only way to receive remuneration is if tourists approach the teyyam and make offerings in exchange for blessings, a rare occurrence in my experience. On the other hand, in this natural setting performers exercise more control over their ritual labour and at least for the human medium receiving the teyyam, devotees and patrons must be publicly deferential.

A third venue where tourists and Malayan musicians increasingly meet is outside Kerala on theatrical stages in cosmopolitan cities around the world, including Paris, New York, and Dubai. Troupes are selected by intermediary events managers and foreign patrons to participate in festivals organized in affluent countries. At first, it is tempting to view the process whereby local musicians become mobile agents, touring and being toured, as a symptom of the de- and re-territorialization characteristic of the current global imagination. Yet the practice of bringing performers from exotic locations to modern Western audiences is hardly new, occurring on a large scale at world fairs and expositions in the nineteenth century (Debord 1969; Erlmann 1999). Besides the public rejection of racist evolutionary ideas on biological and cultural entanglements, the difference today is the scope and scale of transnational movement of cultural goods and services, according to globalization theorists (Appadurai 1996). As a result, more low status ritual specialists are participating in more secular performing venues abroad than ever before, which has stimulated critical debate over the consequences for those concerned about the commercialization of their religion and culture (Bharucha 2003; Tarabout 2003). From the point of view of performers accessing opportunities to travel outside Kerala, however, the benefits appear to far outweigh the risks as they move fluidly between roles as ritual servants and global artists. Indeed, they make a substantial amount of money in Indian rupees and return to their villages as famous individuals, their reputations as performers enhanced by tales of international artistry. But how do we recognize the difference between ritual service and global artistry? One way is to explore the example of one performer whose musical identity and subaltern ritual status was reconfigured through participation in tourism.

I met Manoharan for the first time in March, 2004, at a teyyam festival in northern Kannur district where I watched him play the *kurum kuḷal* with outstanding musicality, endurance, and technical ability (fig. 25). As described in the fieldnotes above, I learned that he had travelled to France the previous year with a troupe to perform at cultural festivals sponsored by the Paris-based "La maison des cultures du monde." As I purchased a copy of the cassette of devotional music he was selling discreetly on the side, he mentioned that he would be performing in Europe and America in the fall on a similar tour and invited me to visit him at his home before he departed.

A month later in mid-April, I arrived in the small coastal village of Mattul. While speeding down the main dusty road in an auto rickshaw under a canopy of coconut palms, I asked the driver where M.T. Manoharan lived. Not until I mentioned that Manoharan had travelled to France did the driver recognize the name. Not knowing precisely where the house was located, he stopped and asked a group of men, referring to Manoharan as "the guy who went to France." They immediately turned and pointed further down the road to the left. Clearly the places one travels serve as important identity markers, especially in the case of foreign countries associated with wealth, power, and status.

Later that year, seated cross-legged on carpets backstage at a theatre in Geneva, M.T. Manoharan opened a cloth sac and carefully removed the brass bell of his kurum kuḷal. Despite the typically cool autumn weather in Switzerland, the crimson spotlights high above warmed the interior enough so that he was comfortable, dressed only in an orange *lungi*, a light piece of cloth tied at the waist, and a thin navy sweater (fig. 26). In a few hours he and nine other performers would present teyyam rituals on stage for the final event concluding a ten-day cultural festival sponsored by "Les ateliers d'ethnomusicologie."[57] Except for the cluttered arrangement of theatre props and bulky metal cases for transporting ritual materials, and the occasional background shouts in French as the technicians completed sound checks, the actions animating the troupe's activities closely resembled those I witnessed around the temporary room-like structures

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[57] Appendix F displays the English promotional cover and program for the festival, "Terre des dieux: Kerala," held in Geneva from Sept. 30 to Oct. 10, 2004.

(*aṇiyaṟa*) of woven coconut thatching used as dressing rooms outdoors at festivals in Malabar. There was playful banter and laughter as the members of the group tackled the specific tasks related to their individual roles. I watched as Manoharan swiftly and meticulously polished the brass with cotton rags until he raised the bell proudly, admiring the lustrous shine, before passing it to me to have a closer look.

These two scenes evoke the highly mobile world of a professional musician from a disadvantaged background earning a living and respect for his family by participating in tourism's global ecumene. This alone, though, does not provide evidence of an expanding sense of what it means to be a ritual musician among the Malayan. To problematize the economic and cultural impact of tourism on identity in this case study, I return to the concepts of payment mentioned in chapter four and the elastic range of meaning embedded in the instrument most associated with the Malayan, the kurum kuḻal.

Signs of a Musician's Labour and Hereditary Authority

If there are changes in the neo-feudal relationship between patron and performer that have shaped Malayan popular identification with music and ritual arts, they should be reflected in terms describing payment. Whereas in the past, performers were paid with shares of the harvest, today they are paid with money, from interactive tourism arenas to sacred kāvūs. But the term used to describe the transaction between patrons and performers is different in each case. When fulfilling the hereditary duty to provide musical services at a sacred site within the boundaries of the family ceṟujanmam, one receives *dakṣiṇa*, which is normally fixed annually by tradition and non-negotiable, functioning like a reward or gift to renew the bonds of service and rights that connect a musician with noble families now represented by temple committees. By contrast, at tourism venues in cities and hotels the payment is frequently called *kūli*, which could be roughly translated as a fee: a one time payment that is negotiable and typically determined on the basis of labour-time. Musicians in this productive arrangement are working as free labourers selling their performing skills based on market demand. Finally, when asked about the remuneration he received for his tour in Paris, Manoharan explained that when they arrived back home they were paid a predetermined amount that he referred to as *śambaḷam*, meaning salary. Unlike coolie, the scale of the economic exchange is much larger since musicians perform at many venues over a period of a month before receiving a large sum. The fact that different performance occasions require distinctive concepts of payment points to different productive arrangements that range from neo-feudal to capitalist forms of exchange.

However, there is also strong continuity from the kāvū to the global stage as positions of dominance and subdominance, patron and performer, are recreated. The former landowning communities that were the main sponsors of the rituals during feudal times and thus the source of subsistence for Malayan families, have assumed most of the leadership roles in the tourism industry, including acting as intermediaries between lower caste performers and tourists (Nair 2002). Accordingly, even as musicians acquire greater freedom in some respects through the capitalization of their labour, they still operate in a similar hegemonic structure in which they remain dependent to varying extents on the same high castes.

In an article tracing some of the key figures and events in the folklorisation of ritual practices of Kerala, Tarabout discusses the critical role mediators or cultural brokers play in this process (2003:47-49). He also invokes a figurative bridge to describe how they connect local cultural practitioners with international patronage, recognizing that at the same time as well-positioned mediators in touristic borderzones aim for profitability, they express genuine concern with protecting ritual artists against Western exoticism and commercialization. The role of protector, is of course, consistent with the neo-feudal social arrangements that still regulate client-patron relations between low and high caste families, which is why it seems impossible to situate mediators without mentioning their identity as high-caste former landowning patrons. The same rituals that high-caste families sponsored for generations are now being taken on tour under high-caste artistic direction and cultural authority. The question is: does the subaltern have to speak to be socially and economically mobile?

Besides the economic distinctions reflected in payment terminology marking the incorporation of new identities, there are shifts in the meaning and function of music. Among the most important ritual uses of sound by the Malayan is the playing of the kurum kuḻal, a double reed instrument required to please and cool the heated energy of particular deities once they are incarnated. Different melodic types are associated with each deity as well as the structure of the ritual, including particular rites and times of day. But the reason for the instrument's prominence go beyond functional explanations that emphasize the active force attributed to sound in strong performances, the instrument is equally a symbol of Malayan musical authority—so much so that groups will bring the instrument to the shrine even when there is no one capable of playing it well. It is effectively a badge for caste identity and a symbol of avakāśam rights and duties inherited from ancestors to serve patron families and the divine. However, at tourist venues, the instrument serves a different patron: festival organizers and the audience. Manoharan remembers his experience in Madras:

> *My first time was in Madras at the University... I was happy to go to Madras because we were treated even better outside than locally. I didn't even think of money since I really wanted to see Madras. Then, after I reached there I was impressed—my mind was happy. Here in Kerala, they've seen it before so they're not impressed, but in Madras they hadn't seen it before so there was some special feeling (April 2004, Mattul).*

When Manoharan performs at rituals in Kerala he plays mainly for the deity, which is reflected by the way he positions himself, carefully following the *teyyam's* every move. There is no organized audience, people are everywhere, talking, coming and going, jostling to get a better look at the incarnate spirit. Conversely, on stage in Geneva everything was necessarily pre-choreographed so musicians were arranged in a line in the background, always facing the audience, except for when they followed the teyyam in its circumambulations around a temporary shrine. Moreover, the event was compressed into a fixed time duration with an intermission in order to conform to Western concert norms, which resulted in none of the long expansive periods of improvisation that characterize the ritual in its sacred context where the actions of the spirit determine the temporal and spatial boundaries of the event. Since the spirit was not fully incarnated in Geneva, the events manager was in total control of the order and thus the performers presented fixed reproducible sequences of gestures aimed at eliciting audience responses in the same order at the same point in each spectacle. Moreover, the sound of the kuḻal indoors is considerably intensified, thereby giving the instrument a much larger presence, which when combined with the elevation of the stage above the audience, influences the experience of performing. In short, the difference is one between sound used as an active means for ritualizing place and communicating with the divine (operating as dicents), and sound performed as spectacle, art for art's sake (as rhemes) (Turino 1999).

Furthermore, the presence of the kuḻal has the multivalent capacity to condense disparate meanings in one form of musical subjectivity, or what Turino has cogently referred to as "semantic snowballing" (ibid.). The semiotic scope of the material form and sound of a double-reed instrument in capable hands ranges from ritual authority based on neo-feudal rights, to national Indian folk heritage, to exotic international artistry on cosmopolitan stages in global cities (Stokes 2004). It is truly a site of affect, "marked by ambivalence between resistance and exclusion that masks contestaton" (Qureshi 1997:4). Viewed from an agency-centred standpoint, the ambivalence surrounding subaltern musical signs of identity stems from a condition of perpetual give-and-take by which families strategize to gain better positioning. Accordingly, it is oversimplifying a situation to say that feudal, national and global international control over the framing of subaltern musical identities according to dominant narratives always ends hegemonically, with musicians getting shortchanged, appropriated, coerced, exploited, misrepresented, in short—acted upon. The reality is that they are far more calculating and resilient than we are frequently led to believe, not only as individuals or collective groups capable of resisting all of the above threats, but also as enterprising agents who find ways of improving their family's local status by taking the risks to build social bridges to mobilize in other fields outside their status quo. Thus the mutually beneficial relationship Manoharan developed with events manager, Ravi Nair, though not by any standard shaped by relational equivalence, nonetheless constitutes a viable and potentially lucrative pathway to a touristic domain full of identity opportunities.

The metaphor of a bridge implies movement in two directions, which suggests that identities can expand without closing off the continuity of spatial and temporal rootedness in places from where they emanate. There is a tendency to view case studies like Manoharan's as evidence of progress from one type of musical self to another, as if local musicians become irreversibly transformed by tourism, for better or for worse, through participation in new global productive arrangements. But this argument does not hold under ethnographic scrutiny, since Manoharan and musicians like him continue to fulfill their duties to provide ritual services within their local network of shrines even as they perform abroad. This fluid adaptation across diverse venues is marked by transactions that involve different concepts and amounts of payment and distinct uses and meanings associated with the kuḻal instrument.

On the other hand, many perspectives tend to interpret the coexistence of contrasting performing practices and productive arrangements as fragmentation. For example, Tarabout's use of the adjectival term, "*fragmentée*," to describe the decontextualisation of Kerala *kalam* ritualists and their mode of worship in the passage from ritual to art (2003:43), prompts me to suggest an alternative. Shifting the focus back towards the producers rather than their products, I argue the opposite: this is a case of integration rather than fragmentation. Observations in the field and oral histories not only confirm a coexistence of different concepts of musical subjectivity, from ritual servant, to national folk performer, to global performing artist, but also demonstrate their interdependence and complementarity. Thus it is more accurate to conceptualize the field of interaction between musical identity and tourism as a continuum ranging from pre-existing identities rooted in neo-feudal ritual service to new ones created through global tourism. In all occasions both sides mutually constitute each other, as musical assets showcased at tourism venues depend on ritual identities rooted in neo-feudal productive relations and local belief systems, while the status of disadvantaged families like Manoharan's is equally enhanced by his reputation as a well-travelled global artist. Whether the hereditary background is disclosed or not, it must be carried forth in practice to reach certain musical fields of production. The fact that Manoharan's name in the program included the Malayan caste tag underlines a decision to ethnicize his caste identity in this particular context, which suggests that the authority of his ritual music expertise is strengthened by his Malayan pedigree.[58]

Far from decline in the aftermath of modernizing forces, the practice of teyyam remains the main form of worship for Hindus in northern Malabar. Despite the evidence for mobility, hierarchical distinctions between patrons and performers quietly persist and yet, the interaction between tourism and identity appears to be generating a positive feedback loop whereby musicians seize global opportunities to improve their family's reputation by accumulating wealth and prestige. Unlike other castes struggling for upward mobility, the Malayan view their hereditary occupational knowledge as an asset rather than as a negative stigma, though in the process of realizing the value of this knowledge they face serious opposition to participation in tourism. For example, private and public disagreements over concerns that spirits might become angry at presentations in secular venues regularly erupt, intra-caste jealousies as some musicians get more opportunities than others fester, and regional concerns about the commodification of oral knowledge and intellectual property losses are debated.

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[58] Appendix G shows the program for teyyams performed in Geneva. Manoharan's name is circled.

That being said, the point I want to make here is that stories like Manoharan's strengthen the concept of alternative modernities by demonstrating how musicians reconcile neo-feudal roles rooted in ritual service with capitalist ideologies of free labour and the arts in a burgeoning tourism industry. They invite more questions about how the industry facilitates and restricts the social and literal mobility of performers, particularly in the case of disadvantaged groups like the Malayan.

Figure 21. View of the front veranda of Swamidasan's home near Kathirur

Figure 22. Rija and Ananth at the Tyagaraja School of Music in Pannur

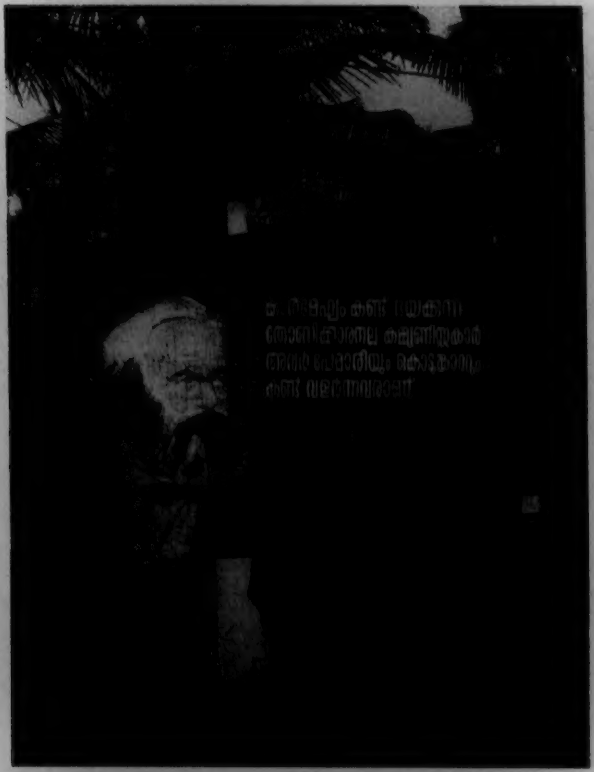

Figure 23. Mounted at a bend in one of the lanes in the village where we lived, a portrait of Karl Marx on a billboard amplifies the CPM's presence in the area

Figure 24. K.P.C. Panikkar (seated) plays the *ilattalam* for a teyyam in Kunnaru

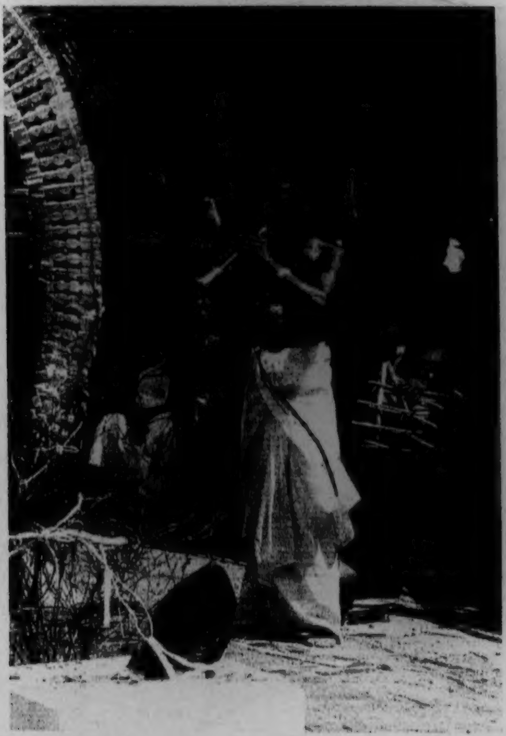

Figure 25. Manoharan plays the *kurum kuḻal* for a teyyam near Kunnaru

Figure 26. Manoharan prepares for a teyyam performance backstage in Geneva

CONCLUSION AND NEW DIRECTIONS

> "… I am concerned primarily with what music is, and not what it is used for. If we know what it is, we might be able to use and develop it in all kinds of ways that have not been imagined, but which may be inherent in it." (Blacking 1973:26)

The problem of agency that surfaces in Blackings invitation to examine sound structures as windows onto social structures in *How Musical is Man?* provides a fitting closure for this ethnography of Malayan socio-musical mobility. First of all, who are the "we" whom Blacking envisions developing and using music in new ways? Music scholars? Musicians? Humanity? Contrary to Blacking's insistence on starting with the music, this dissertation started with musicians, asking instead, how they (not ethnomusicologists) use music, economically and symbolically, to make a living and improve their social status by moulding patterns of identity in ways that challenge established power relations and caste stereotypes. By making social relations the centrepiece rather than sound objects, the study turned the opening statement on its head: instead of asking what music is, it followed musicians' agency based on the principle that if we know what music is used for, who uses it and for whom, we will get closer to knowing what it is.

This approach guided my partnership with a community of Malayan performers whose stories of reconfiguring hereditary musicality at modern venues underline a need to engage social relations as a source of intimate knowledge about music and identity. Ironically, the families who collaborated with me for this study appear to mirror Blacking's vision of what might be accomplished if "we" learn to discern the social patterns inherent in the musical object. That is to say, they recognize social identity opportunities in performance structures and "use and develop music in all kinds of ways not imagined" (ibid.). The difference between Blacking's imagination and the imaginations of the musicians, however, is considerable. Malayan musical imaginaries are above all characterized by working directly with sound in order to earn a living in hereditary and non-hereditary contexts, whereas music scholars engage humanly organized sound by listening and consuming, but not producing. Instead of contemplating how we can use the music of Others for leisure and exegetical projects, the Malayan case studies invite us to consider how research could benefit substantially from recognizing how a community's active sonic beauty is defined first by productive music making.

Blacking's classic ethnomusicology text also serves as a locus for briefly revisiting the perennial challenge of the music object. Moreover, it underlines the continuing relevance of the kind of boundless curiosity and innovation famously modelled by influential careers like his. His call to seek out new ways of understanding the relationship between humanly organized patterns of sound and social relations, gradually supplanted earlier comparative musicological emphasis on collecting and analyzing isolated sound samples. Yet despite the benefit of hindsight afforded current research drawing on thirty years of recovering the agency of the Other, the restrictive view, that scholars should begin with the music even when oriented towards anthropology, has wavered relatively little since the 1970s, or for that matter, since the modern inception of music scholarship in academia. The identification of genre in music as a disciplinary focus hinged strongly on the parallel emergence of a bourgeois concept of the musical work and a particular mode of focussed listening that became organized through reference to serious and popular music genres (Goehr 1992; Johnson 1995; Kushner 2000; Gramit 2002). Since then, attempts to apprehend different ways of organizing sound humanly have turned patterns of sound into discrete categories of musical experience, often assumed to reflect social divisions along class, ethnic, gender, and national affiliations within the contours of what Veit Erlmann eruditely describes as a Western and non-Western global imagination, "...shaped by inextricably intertwined aesthetic practices, fictional genres, and discourses of personal and collective identity" (1999:144). Outside of Erlmann's important social history of the key contribution of genres in constructing and facilitating a global imagination of African musical identities, emphasis in the field has typically explored what genres consist of, rather than how they can be mobilized to serve different agendas. The result has been a tendency to conflate musical identities with musical genres, as if one mirrors the other, when in fact most musicians treat genre as a resource for shaping identities.

The theoretical approach and ethnography of Malayan families presented in this thesis depart from genre-centred paradigms as a strategy for confronting another formidable episteme: caste. Despite a turn in the 1980s towards recognizing the dynamics and fluidity of caste identities in anthropology, discourses on performing arts and rituals still have a tendency to represent South Asian communities as static and inherently stratified. As a result, attempts to develop a truly practice-centred ethnomusicology in Indic music scholarship are frustrated by the prominence of research paradigms fixed on caste or ethnic-music genres. This study has tried to show why the classification of sound idioms into genres, framed as indissoluble from communal affiliations, does not provide an adequate framework for exploring the hybridity, agency, and mobility of musical lives in contemporary India. This is not, however, to imply that genres are irrelevant; I am simply suggesting that more flexible representations are needed if we are to enrich our understanding of how music contributes to the politics of identity formation in India. As the Malayan case studies have shown, caste is an important resource and orientation in the struggle to earn a living and to maintain a sense of rootedness in ancestral lineages and collective histories. However, by exploring individual and familial variations through life histories and stories we avoid the pitfall of essentializing collectivities with misguided enthusiasm for communal categories like caste, religion, and village. In this way, a musician-centred focus results in more compelling interpretations of the complexity of the interaction between Indian subjectivity and broader social frames of reference.

In Kerala, as in other Indian states, colonial ethnographic legacies and the exigencies of nation-building have valorized representations of musical practices that mould caste (including Christian and Muslim subgroups), musical style, and performing context into single essentialized units of identity, easily amenable to classification under an inherently asymmetrical institutionalized great-versus-little dichotomy/continuum (Babiracki 1991; Guillebauld 2004). According to this scheme, the northern (Hindustani) and southern (Karnatic) classical traditions, including the Kerala dance-drama *katakaḷi* and various temple genres, are associated with high castes, whereas the "little" traditions belong to low castes or scheduled castes and tribes. Muslim music genres can also be either great or little, as reflected by the difference in prestige accorded by national institutions like the All India Radio between Hindustani Muslim *gharānās* (and the low-status Mappilla "folk" songs in Kerala (*Mappillapāṭṭukaḷ*). Ethnomusicology and Indian musicology has centred for the most part on the great classical traditions (Powers 1980; Neuman [1980] 1990; Sambamoorthy 1982; Wade 1984), although studies of marginalized musical practices are increasing (Prasad 1985; Qureshi 1986; Henry 1988; Babiracki 1991; Manuel 1993; Sherinian 1998; Wolf 2006). Yet even with the recent turn towards more balanced representation of previously marginalized South Asian music, the focus in both classical and non-classical scholarship usually remains concentrated on the musical idiom-in-context, thereby encouraging debates on the interaction across genres to revolve around disembodied stylistic, formal, and contextual influences measured using criteria developed primarily for analyzing classical genres (Allen 1998). I contend that, at least from a theoretical perspective, the "great-versus-little" scheme does more than simplify the complex overlapping or diffusion of stylistic features across musical communities and contexts variously labelled folk or classical: it precludes the possibility of studying how musicians build versatile means of musical production capable of accessing pathways with potential for upward mobility. Thus at the same time as this study contributes to expanding the investigative scope in Indic music scholarship to engage all sound-related practices on their terms, it also critiques reductionist and totalizing tendencies by resisting the static framing of musical idioms according to monolithic caste/communal common denominators.

In contrast with other cultural markers of hereditary caste-based occupations that constrain upwardly mobile ambitions (Osella and Osella 2000), the Malayan musicians demonstrate how musical or more broadly speaking, artistic assets, provide a unique set of skills that enable practitioners to adapt to diverse productive arrangements. Performing communities in particular, take advantage of opportunities to adopt higher status positionings by virtue of the inalienable presence of music labourers from venues of live performance, an opportunity unavailable to manual labourers and artists whose material products are not consumed in the process of creation, including painters or potters (Qureshi 2000). While in some situations it is more profitable for performing groups to emphasize their ethnic association with a genre, at other times it is better to de-ethnicize musical identities to gain acceptance in other training or performing venues, yet in both cases they still draw on hereditary skills. This is the strategy that the Malayan have been using to access classical Karnatic music training and teaching opportunities, *gānamēḷa* orchestral entertainment venues featuring film songs, as well as contracts with political parties to make recordings, compose songs, or perform at rallies. By contrast, in other situations, namely those derived from or involving teyyam spirit medium ceremonies and other rituals, the ethnicization of caste is not only inevitable, since everyone knows which communities are associated with which occupations, but also highly desirable because access to these venues still depends on ethnicizing (publicly amplifying) one's caste in a productive arrangement structured by neo-feudal relations. Accordingly, theories of identity subscribing to a Sanskritization model do not adequately describe how Malayan individuals are using their musical assets to get the best of both worlds, keeping music ethnicized in some venues and de-ethnicized in others. This is largely because their actions involve conversion or extension of musical assets rather than outright rejection in favour of high caste practices. The Malayan case studies also demonstrate how strategies of ethnicizing or de-ethnicizing musical identities are best explored through individual agency within familial frames of reference rather than strictly through a communal lens. This is why a flexible relationship between genres and performance underpins my concept of musical mobility. The strategic versatility I observed in practice among the Malayan in Malabar provided ample evidence for interrogating anew the relationship between music, economy, and identity in India.

However, approaching identity as a vehicle for socio-musical mobility requires acknowledging the extent to which a Western-dominated discourse of modernity has created the possibility for its currency in the first place. For some thinkers, the idea that identity provides an evolving resource for self-presentation in a society characterized by relative hierarchical distinctions, is premised on the view that there is a progressive weakening of traditional social ties. This disjuncture has been described as a kind of disembedding effect, what Anthony Giddens terms, a "lifting up" out of traditional social structures governed by religious belief systems, enabling identity formation based on individual freedom (1991). Hence, Charles Taylor recently described embeddedness as an "inability to imagine oneself outside a certain matrix" (2004:55)

While these theoretical tools provide a compelling key for interpreting the evolution of social relations and self-awareness in some societies, in contemporary Indian society evidence of clear distinctions between the traditional and the modern, embeddedness and disembeddedness, appears entangled beyond recognition in most cases. This is particularly true for historically marginalized and disadvantaged groups. The vast majority of the population living outside the affluent urban lifestyles of India's most privileged, embody contiguous embedding and disembedding ways of relating to other social actors that defy any attempt to predict a teleological narrative for Indian modernity. Returning to the context of mixed patronage, hereditary performers maximize the use of traditional knowledge along a continuum of venues that reflect a full spectrum of relative embeddedness to disembeddedness, ranging from neo-feudal to free market hybrid arrangements, which insist that any analytical use of social mobility and identity must be carefully grounded in this Indian social reality. The image of a continuum provides a useful heuristic for anchoring my understanding of how identity and social mobility can be related to the postcolonial public culture concept of alternative modernities. Taking the alternatively modern perspective to mean investigating alterity and the nexus of articulations rather than predeterminisms (Knauft 2002:40), the theoretical accomplishment of this thesis is the regional perspective it offers on the relationship between identity and socio-musical mobility, as they articulate with shifting productive arrangements in a case study of an Indian hereditary performing caste.

In many ways this dissertation is best viewed as a springboard for launching more substantial directions of research. On a purely musical level, the hereditary Malayan sound system merits closer collaborative work. Ideally, this should be pursued in tandem with a cultural insider interested in bringing the community's musicality into the discourse of music scholarship and establishing rules and norms for respecting indigenous protocol in the process. To complement the sophisticated and systematic comparative work being done on "folk" music at the Calicut university Centre for Folklore Studies and the Kerala Folklore Academy, as well as Indian departments of anthropology and music, it would be fruitful to invite Malayan to reflect more on the hereditary set of musical criteria informing their creative process. Before engaging the task of mapping the shared stylistic features between classical and Malayan idioms, it seems vital to improve our understanding of how music works in the ritual process. Teyyam is an incredibly complicated social, linguistic, artistic, religious, political, philosophical, and material complex of embodied knowledge that resists attempts to single out any one dimension as much as it evades efforts to synthesize all the pieces. Nor are these efforts particularly welcome considering it is a highly sensitive, esoteric oral tradition. Accordingly, the goal of learning about the underlying principles regulating Malayan "sonic theology" should reach for music-centred paradigms of analysis that respect standpoint and integrity of Malayan musicians if it is to enrich our understanding of the beauty and agency of their ritual sound system.

Secondly, each one of the three fields of musical production outside Malayan hereditary contexts are ripe for more systematic qualitative exploration. A statistical survey, for instance, could draw from a wide sample of Malayan life histories to provide a much stronger basis for assessing the extent to which the community has moved into other musical fields. To this end, Subramanian and Weidman's socially-engaged critical histories of South Indian classical music have opened up exciting possibilities for rethinking the democratization of classical music culture in India, its scope and diversification (2006; 2006). In the political field there is important work to be done on the social networks, technologies, and creative processes involved in the production of music inside political arenas. Lastly, the growing participation of musicians in Kerala's cultural tourism industry and global festival network is perhaps the most timely direction for problematizing the global scope of socio-musical mobility.

Finally, while my decision to engage agency and representation through the prism of identity and socio-musical mobility is influenced by specific regional dynamics in Kerala, it also reflects an incipient ambition to join others who are chartering new courses for cultural advocacy in academia (Sherinian 1998; Maciszewsky 2001; Qureshi 2001). One avenue is to invite musicians to take on prominent roles as collaborators, by prioritizing their presence and agency in the field as well as in theoretical frameworks. To this end, I have found life stories to be invaluable for placing individual experience and social ties at the centre of my interpretive thinking. Guided by Marxist ideas about labour and value, Bourdieu's concepts of fields and the habitus (1994), Lin's theory of social capital (2001), and the perspective of alternative modernities (Chakrabarty 2002; Knauft 2002), this thesis extends an advocatory conversation: about the dynamic interplay between Malayan musical agency and contextual limitations; about the semantic and material possibilities for mobilizing hereditary sonic sensibilities; about the elasticity of

caste and the versatility of artistic capabilities; and, about the evocative dignity of performers in India.

GLOSSARY

ālāpanam—an unaccompanied improvisatory section of a classical composition that serves to introduce the notes and characteristic features of the melodic character of the piece, the *rāgam*

akṣamāla—necklace of beads representing chant syllables

aṇiyaṟa—temporary green room (dressing room) made of dried coconut fronds and bamboo where materials used to create the form of the deity are prepared and the faces of the *kōlakkāran* are painted

anugraham—blessing, divine favour

anughraha sambhāṣaṇam—blessings conversation

aruḷappāṭū—speech of God or Royalty; address by special authority

āṭṭam—dance

avakāśam—hereditary birthright and duty to provide a service within a prescribed area determined by the boundaries of former little kingdoms

Bhagavati—generic term for a Goddess

Bharatanaṭyam—classical Indian dance

bhāva—expression or mood; associated with drama and other arts

brga—tremolo, a style of musical ornamentation in which the singer rapidly alternates between pitches; may also refer to vibrato, the stylized fluctuation of pitch in vocal music

ceṇṭa—cylindrical double-headed wooden drum played with one or two sticks; found chiefly in Kerala where it is associated with temple rituals

ceṟujanmam—little kingdom by birth

caviṭṭunāṭukam—popular plays performed with musical accompaniment in public open spaces

colluka—to chant; also to sing

dakṣiṇa—gift; token or payment for religious service

darśana—viewing the divine

dēvasvam bharaṇam—temple board administration that succeeded private landowners in the management of temple properties and facilities following Indian Independence

eṭṭukeṭṭu—two attached, traditional quadrangular Nayar matrilineal homes

Gānabhuṣaṇam—certificate program in vocal music excellence administered by the University of Madras

gānamēḷa—a musical concert featuring an orchestra specializing in performances of popular cinema songs

Ganapati kai—short musical prayer played on the *ceṇṭa* for the pan-Hindu God of auspicious beginnings, Lord Ganapati

gītam—a song, usually devotional in theme

gōdāvari—Malayan ritual whereby a young boy is dressed like Krishna the cow herder and songs are sung to bring prosperity to homes; previously performed door-to-door during the rainy season in exchange for grains and vegetables, but recently declining in participation

gurudakṣina—symbolic token or gift presented to a guru as an expression of gratitude and devotion on the part of the student; typically consists of a small amount of money wrapped in betel leaf

gurukulam—traditional system of education where students learn from a guru by serving him as a member of (or frequent visitor to) his household

guru-śiṣyan parambara—teacher-disciple tradition of knowledge transmission

ilattāḷam—pair of bell-metal cymbals attached by a cord used in temple and *kāvŭ* rituals to keep time, including teyyam

janmasiddham—that which is obtained by birthright

japikkuka—quiet repetitive chanting of sacred texts

jāti—local endogamous occupational groups that resemble Medieval guilds in Europe

kalāśam—cadence or culminating end point associated with dance

kaliyāṭṭam—lit. "play of the Gods"; teyyam festival

kaṇṇēṟŭ—evil eye

kaṇṇēṟupāttŭ—songs for removing the effects of the evil eye *katakaḷi*—classical temple dance-drama based on stories from the Hindu epics, the Ramayana and the Mahabharata

kāvŭ—sacred grove pervaded with divine presence as a result of shrines and small temples dedicated to particular deities in northern Kerala

kiṇṭi—brass pitcher used in Hindu puja worship and teyyam rituals

kirtanam—popular devotional songs

kōlakkāran—person from a teyyam performing community who takes on the appearance or figure of a God or Goddess

kōlam—divine form or appearance; divine figures drawn on floor surface with rice powder

kōlŭ—drum stick

kombŭ—large semi-circular brass horn with no valves played in temple ensembles, including *pañcavādyam*

kōmaram—possessed ritual specialist at teyyam festivals; oracle

koṭṭikalāśam—rhythmic cadence marking a transition or ending in ceṇṭa performance

koṭṭukkāran—drummer

kōvilakam—palace; residence of a local king or *Kshatriya*

Kshatriya—kingly ruling class in South Asia

kśētra pravēśana villambaram—temple entry act passed by the government of Travancore in 1936

kuladaivam—guardian deity of a caste or family lineage

kulānusāstram—lineage knowledge

kūli—small payment in the form of a fee or wage; typically determined on the basis of a fixed period time

kuṇḍalini—energy concentrated in the *mūlādhara* at the base of the spine, one of six energy centres in the body

kurum kuḷal—double-reed aerophone used in temples and other ritual setting, including teyyam; made of wood with a bell; shawm

kuṭiyāṭṭam—classical Sanskrit theatre indigenous to Kerala

laḷitagāna—light songs

maddaḷam—ceramic double-headed barrel drum *mantram*—chanted invocation used for healing and worship in Hinduism

mantravādam—sorcery; traditional healing; divination

mātra—one unit of time in a cyclical framework; one beat

māyamāḷavagowḷa—popular seven-note rāgam in Karnatic music typically used to teach beginners with; it contains flat second and sixth degrees

mōhiniyāṭṭam—classical dance form developed in Kerala

mokṣa—release from the cycle of rebirth in Hindu cosmology

mūlādhara—one of six prime energy centres in the human body, located between the anus and the genitalia at the base of the spine

mūrtti—embodied image or form of a deity

muṭi—lit. hair; headdress

muṭiyēṯṯŭ—ritual dance drama performed as an offering at temples in central Kerala

nāda—sacred primordial sound

Nad-Brahman—pervasive primordial sound of the cosmos in Hindu philosophy; union of sonic feminine energy with the sonic manifestation of Brahman, the supreme being of the universe

nāgasvaram—long conical double-reed instrument used in temple ensembles at auspicious occasions, including in processions and at weddings

nalleṇṇa—sesame seed oil; used by ceṇṭa musicians to lubricate the wrists and soothe any aches caused by repetitive rolling movements

Nambūtiri—Malayali Hindu Brahmin community representing the highest priestly authority in Kerala temples; also formerly held vast titles to agricultural land

naṭanpāṭṭukal—folk songs

Nayar—formerly matrilineal, landowning martial caste in Kerala

nērcca—offering to a deity

niṟam—lit. colour; also mood or character

niyēdyam—food offering to a God or Goddess in Hindu puja worship

ōṭṭan tuḷḷal—a dance-drama that uses satire to draw attention to social issues; accompanied by a percussion ensemble led by *maddaḷam*

Paḻaśirājā—legendary little king in northern Malabar (now Kannur and Wayanad districts) famous for fiercely resisting British colonialism at the end of the Nineteenth Century

pañcavādyam—music ensemble consisting of five instruments (mostly percussion) associated with temples ceremonies and processions in Kerala

panchayat—local administrative area

pāṭuka—to sing

perimbaṟa—large kettle drum

periya mēḷam—large temple ensemble including *tavil*, *nāgasvaram*, cymbals

pēṯṯicci—midwife

pīṭham—sacred seat or throne for a divine form; typically made of wood in the context of teyyam worship

pradakṣiṇam—circumambulation of a temple or sacred centre; a pan-Hindu ritual practice at temples

pramānimār—leaders

pūja—act of worship through ceremonial offerings to Hindu deities

rāgam—melodic type in Indian classical music theory, the mood and identity of which is defined by discrete pitch classes and characteristic phrases

rāhukālam—inauspicious time of the day

rāṣṭrīyam—politics

rūpam—visual form

śabda—scripture; sound, voice, word

śabdikkuka—to produce a sound, to speak

sakhāvū—comrade

Śākta-Tantra—a branch of Hindu Tantrism centred around worshipping form of the Mother Goddess by awakening powerful feminine energy in the human body

śakti—feminine life force or power associated with Goddesses in Hinduism; also refers to the manifestations of the supreme Mother Goddess herself

śambaḷam—salary

samsāram—the cycle of rebirth; reincarnation in Hindu cosmology

sangīttam—music

śaṅkhŭ—conch shell used in Hindu temple rituals to awaken the deities

saraḷi variśai—foundational Karnatic music exercises aimed at becoming familiar with melodic and rhythmic concepts while developing intonation and technique

śastriyasangītam—systematized knowledge about music

Shudra—artisans and manual labourers

sinemapāṭṭukal—cinema songs

ślōkam—verse; couplet recited in stylized way

sparśikkuka—to feel by touching

svāra—pitch; intonation

tabla—a pair of North Indian drums that are played with the hands; used primarily to accompany soloists in Hindustani classical, light-classical, and popular idioms

tāḷam—cyclical rhythmic framework of beats

tamburān—master or lord; also God

taṟavāṭŭ—ancestral home; matrilineal household

tāvil—double-headed barrel drum played with a thick stick on the left side and fingers bandaged with a hardened coating of cotton and rice paste (like thimbles) on the other side; played during temple processions in the *periya mēḷam* and also for weddings

tāyampaka—high-caste temple drumming tradition involving complex rhythmic compositional practices; performed by the Ambalavasi Mārār caste at processions and daily rituals

teyyam—a spirit-medium ceremony performed in northern Kerala; term for local deities

teyyāṭṭam—see *teyyam*

tekkatŭ—southern room in a home (or structure in a compound) typically used for worshipping the form of a deity

timil[illegible]—a small hourglass drum with adjustable tension enabling the player to articulate different pitches; typically played with a drum in temple ensembles

tiṟayāṭṭam—see teyyam

Tiyya—numerically dominant and professionally heterogeneous community in Malabar; formerly untouchable, though now among the fastest upwardly mobile communities in Kerala; in the south they are called Izhava *toḻil*—labour

toḻilāḷi—labourer

tōṯṯam—the stage in a teyyam performance leading to the embodiment of a deity

tōṯṯampāṭṭukal—the repertory of ritual songs of worship that narrate the qualities, history, and places of a deity, and are sung mainly to awaken the śakti inside the body-medium of a performer

tuṭi—a small double-sided drum

uṇarttikkuka—to submit or inform; to open up to someone of higher status about personal problems

uṇarttuka—awaken

uṟayuka—tremble; be in a frenzy; be possessed

uruḷakkai—rolling hand; term for describing ceṇṭa technique

uruḷi—shallow vessel made of bell-metal used to hold offerings in Hindu *pūja* worship

urjam—the energy music creates to awaken the presence of the deity in the body-medium

utsavam—festival; celebration

uttējippikkuka—energize; stimulate; arouse

vadyam—a temple music ensemble in Kerala

vāddhyār—priest

Vaidyan (also Vaidyar)—Ayurvedic doctor trained in the science of medical treatment according to the Vedas; an occupation typically held by high caste communities

Vaisya—merchants and traders

Vaṇṇān—teyyam performing caste also associated with the hereditary occupations of washing clothes

varaviḷi—a chant idiom performed by a teyyam performer in the early stages to call the power of a deity whose presence is sought into the body-medium

varna—literally "colour" or "race"; the term refers to the division of Indian society into four hierarchical categories in Vedic Hinduism

varnaśrama—belief system systematically elaborated in the Laws of Manu (composed between 200 BCE and 200 CE) in which caste Hindu society was divided into four groups based on relative degrees of purity and pollution: Brahman (scholars and priests), *Kshatriya* (martial rulers), *Vaisya* (merchants and traders), and *Shudra* (artisans and labourers).

Vēḷār—caste of potters and ritualists in Tamil Nadu

vēṭanpāṭṭukal—songs performed during Karkkaṭakam (July-August) door to door at high-caste homes as a part of a ritual in which a young Malayan man dresses as Shiva disguised as a hunter. The purpose of the ritual is to remove any evil spirits. The Malayan receive small amounts of money, cloth, and foodstuffs in exchange for this service.

vijayadaśāmi—an auspicious time for beginning new learning or other ambitions determined according to a change in the planetary stage; it falls after the Hindu *Navarātri* festival in October.

vīkkŭ—a double-headed wooden, cylindrical drum played with one stick and used primarily to keep the tāḷam (meter) in teyyam rituals

vīna—indigenous plucked, fretted chordophone (lute) featured as a solo instrument mainly in Karnatic classical music idioms; associated with the pan-Hindu Goddess of learning and music, Sarasvati

viplavagānam—revolutionary songs; hymns of protest

viśēṣa vādyakāra—title of special musicians conferred upon the Malayan under the reign of *Paḻaśirājā*, a Kolatiri king famous for having vehemently resisted British colonial policies and expansion

vratam—fasting; continence

yantra—an amulet consisting of a diagram empowered by mantras to guard against physical and mental illnesses

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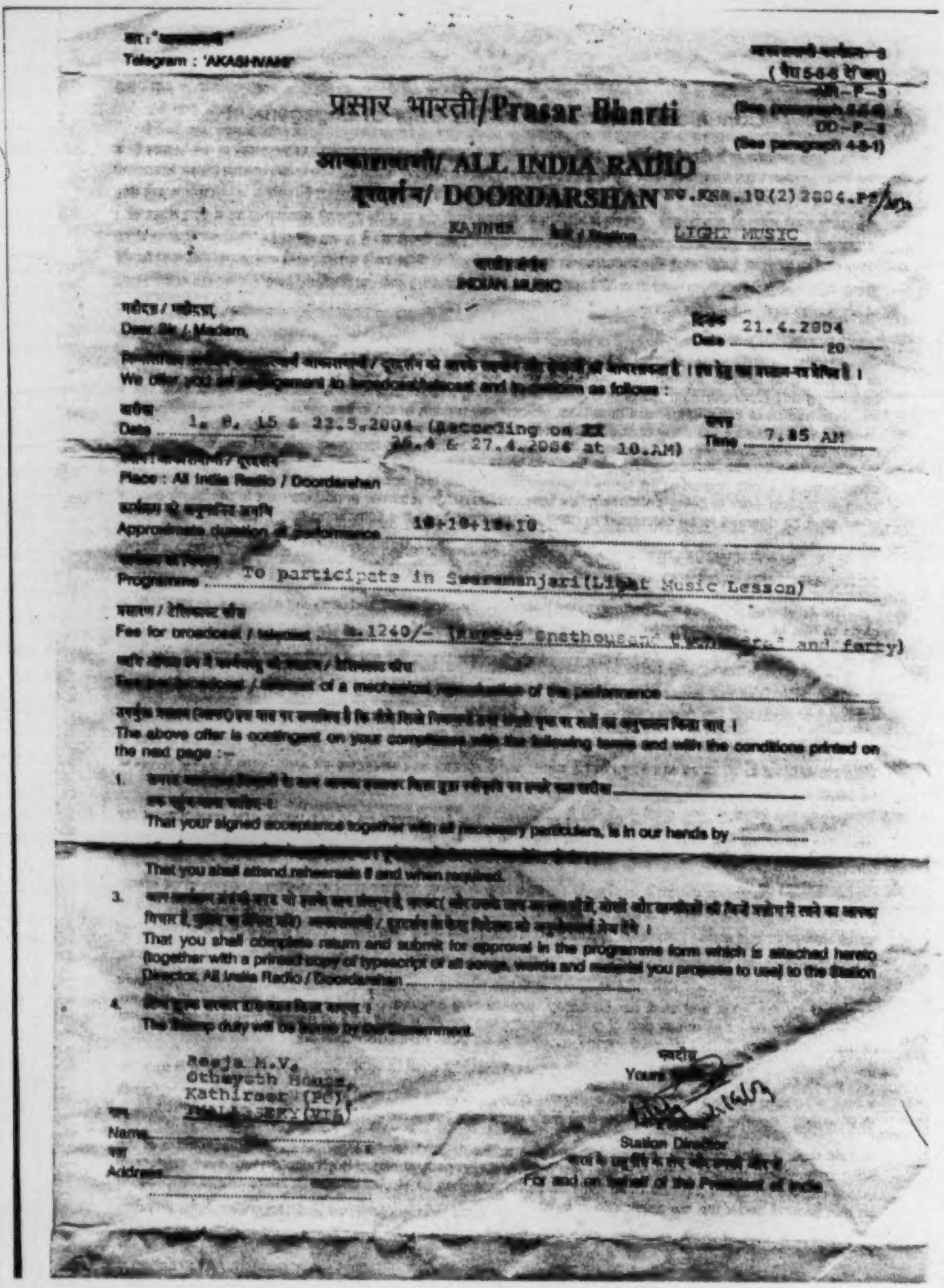
Appendix A. Rija's All India Radio Contract



तार : "[illegible]"
Telegram : 'AKASHVANI'

[illegible]
AIR–P–3
(See paragraph [illegible])
DD–P–3
(See paragraph 4-8-1)

प्रसार भारती/Prasar Bharti

आकाशवाणी/ ALL INDIA RADIO

दूरदर्शन/ DOORDARSHAN No.KNR.10(2)2004.PP/[illegible]

KANNUR केंद्र / Station LIGHT MUSIC

[illegible]
INDIAN MUSIC

[illegible]
Dear Sir / Madam,

[illegible]
Date 21.4.2004 20

[illegible]
We offer you an engagement to broadcast/telecast and to perform as follows :

[illegible]
Date 1, 8, 15 & 22.5.2004 (Recording on XX 26.4 & 27.4.2004 at 10.AM) [illegible] Time 7.05 AM

[illegible]
Place : All India Radio / Doordarshan

[illegible]
Approximate duration of performance 10+10+10+10

[illegible]
Programme To participate in Swaramanjari(Light Music Lesson)

[illegible]
Fee for broadcast / telecast Rs.1240/- (Rupees Onethousand [illegible] and forty)

[illegible]
Fee per broadcast / telecast of a mechanical reproduction of the performance

[illegible]
The above offer is contingent on your compliance with the following terms and with the conditions printed on the next page :–

1. [illegible]
That your signed acceptance together with all necessary particulars, is in our hands by

That you shall attend rehearsals if and when required.

3. [illegible]
That you shall complete return and submit for approval in the programme form which is attached hereto (together with a printed copy of typescript of all songs, words and material you propose to use) to the Station Director, All India Radio / Doordarshan

4. [illegible]
The Stamp duty will be borne by the Government.

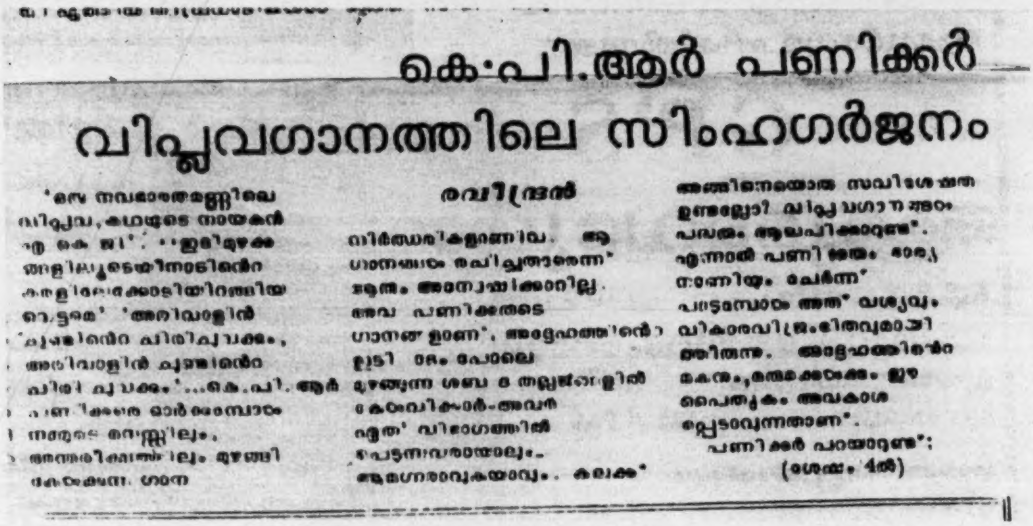
Reeja M.V.
Othayoth House,
Kathiroor (PO)
[illegible] (VIA)

[illegible]
Name
[illegible]
Address

[illegible]
Yours faithfully
Station Director
[illegible]
For and on behalf of the President of India

Appendix B. Communist Newspaper Headline

Clipping from *Gaddika*, March 21, 2000: "K.P.R. Panikkar: A Roaring Lion in Revolutionary Songs"



കെ.പി.ആർ പണിക്കർ

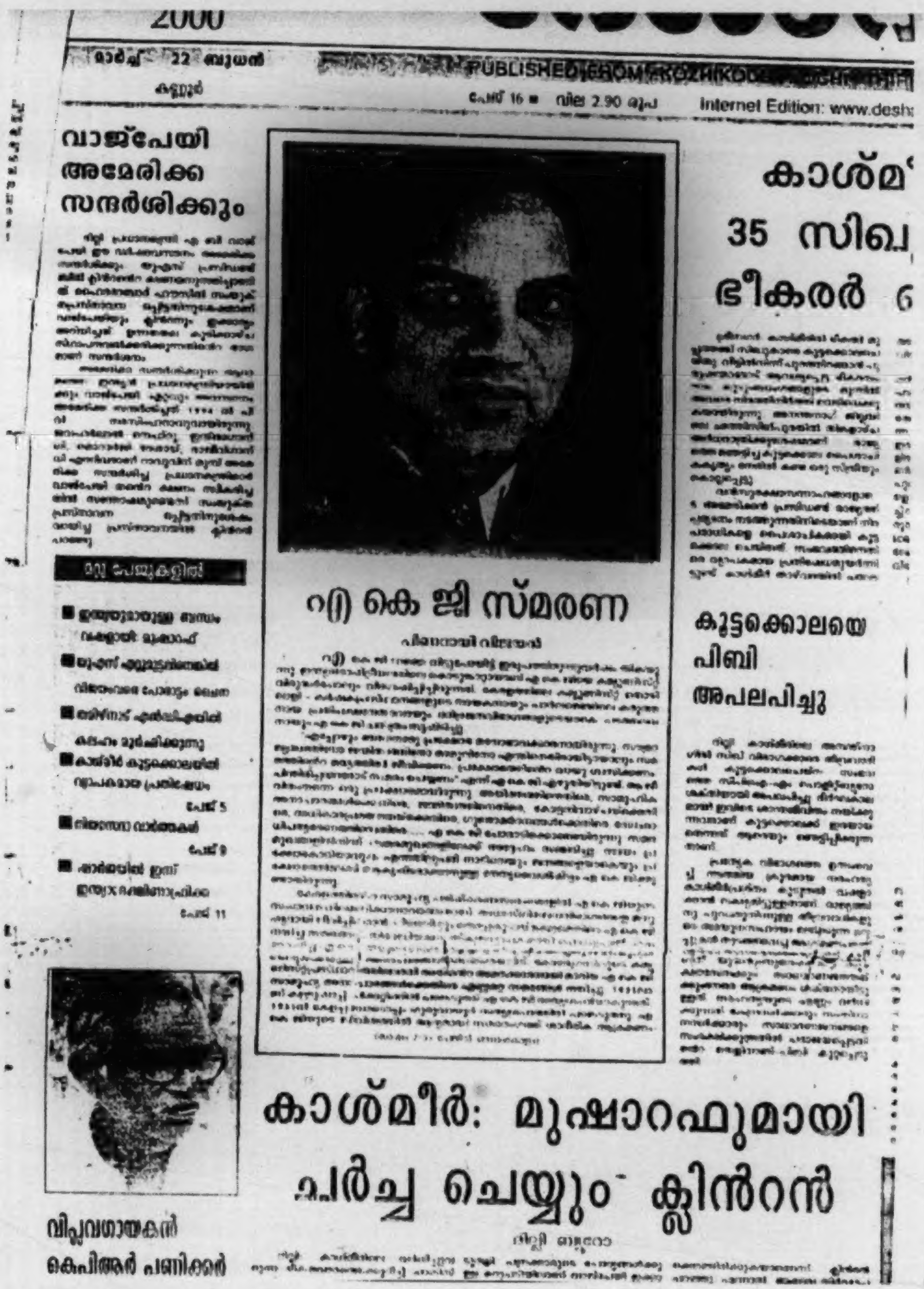
വിപ്ലവഗാനത്തിലെ സിംഹഗർജനം

രവീന്ദ്രൻ

(ശേഷം 4ൽ)

Appendix C. K. P. R. Panikkar's Obituary

Front page of Deshabhimani newspaper, March 22, 2000: K.P.R. Panikkar's Obituary (bottom left) juxtaposed with A.K. Gopalan Memorial (top)



2000

മാർച്ച് 22 ബുധൻ

കണ്ണൂർ

PUBLISHED FROM KOZHIKODE

പേജ് 16 ■ വില 2.90 രൂപ

Internet Edition: www.desh

വാജ്പേയി അമേരിക്ക സന്ദർശിക്കും

മറ്റു പേജുകളിൽ

എ കെ ജി സ്മരണ

പിണറായി വിജയൻ

കാശ്മ

35 സിഖ

ഭീകരർ

കൂട്ടക്കൊലയെ പിബി അപലപിച്ചു

വിപ്ലവഗായകൻ കെപിആർ പണിക്കർ

കാശ്മീർ: മുഷാറഫുമായി ചർച്ച ചെയ്യും ക്ലിൻറൻ

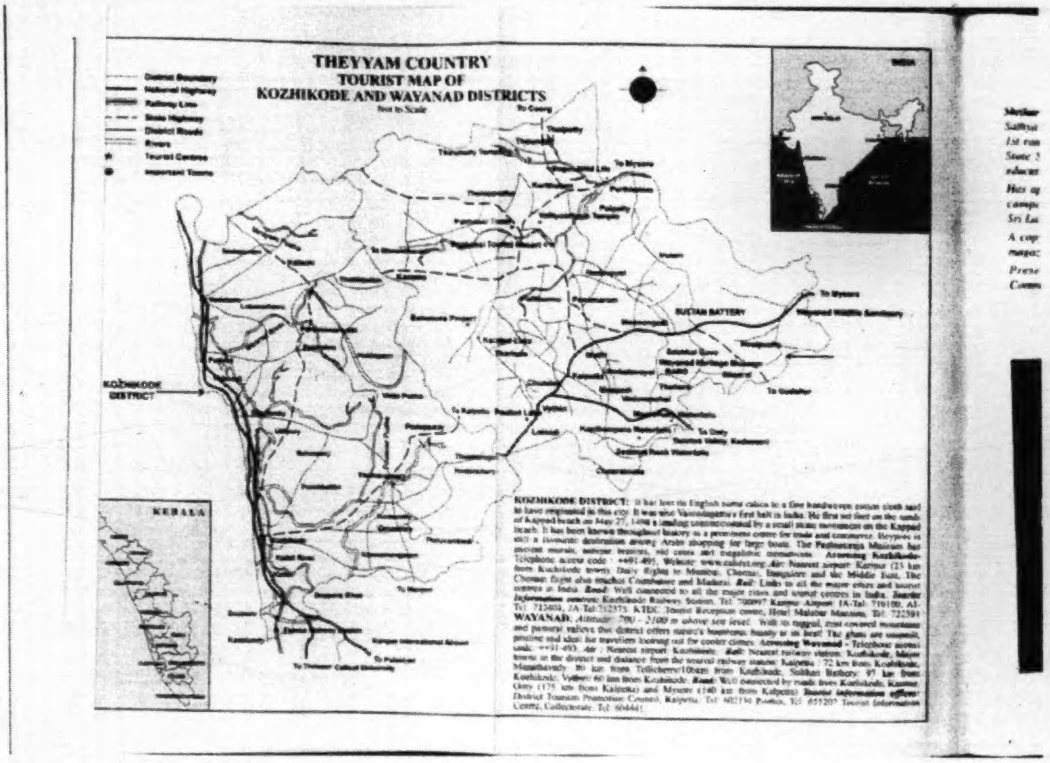
ദില്ലി ബ്യൂറോ

Appendix D. Ganamela Concert Advertisement

Poster for a *ganamela* concert featuring the Kunnaru family. Suresh Panikkar is second in the top row and Sunil is first in the bottom row. The young woman is their second cousin

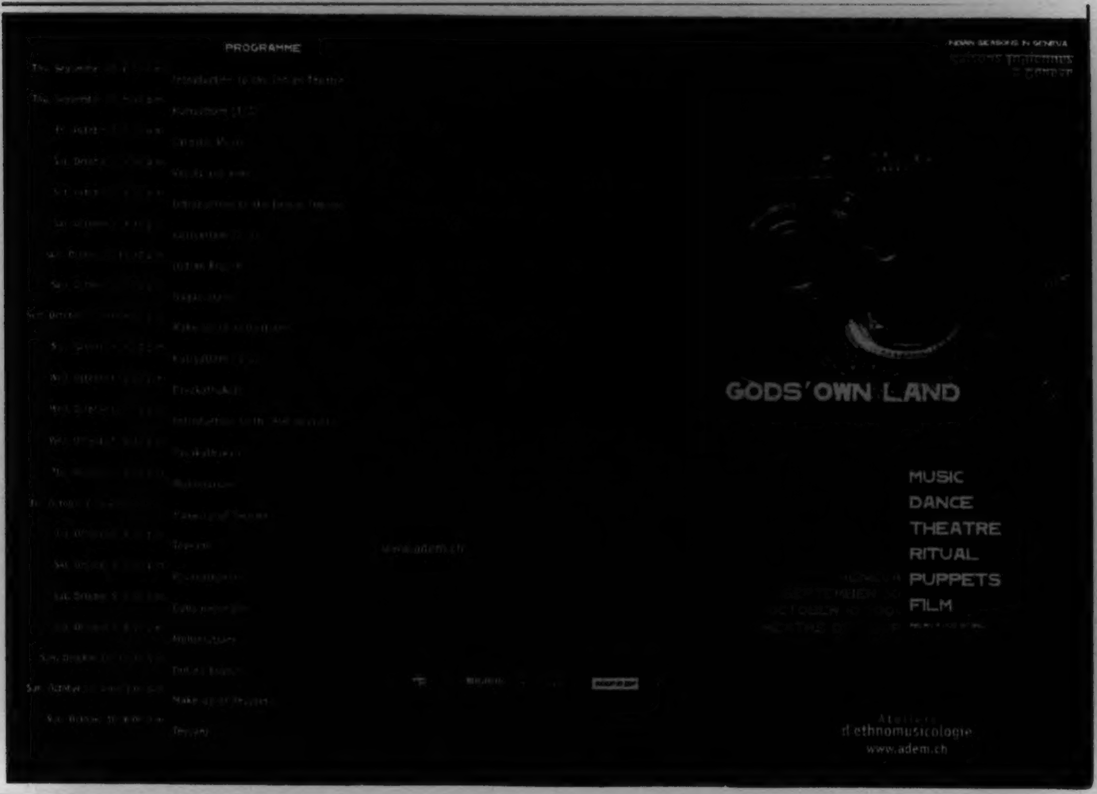
lusic Dreams of Malaba
പയ്യന്നൂർ
GANAMELA
Design: TAJU 505678
സോനമഹൽ
0498-507342
പയ്യന്നൂർ

Appendix E. "Theyyam Country" Tourist Map


THEYYAM COUNTRY
TOURIST MAP OF
KOZHIKODE AND WAYANAD DISTRICTS
Not to Scale
District Boundary
National Highway
Railway Line
State Highway
District Roads
Rivers
Tourist Centres
Important Towns
To Coorg
To Mysore
SULTAN BATTERY
To Mysore
To Gudalur
To Ooty
KOZHIKODE DISTRICT
KERALA
INDIA
Karipur International Airport
To Palakkad
KOZHIKODE DISTRICT:
WAYANAD:

Appendix F. Kerala Performing Arts Festival Programme

Promotional cover featuring teyyam, Geneva, 2004



PROGRAMME

INDIAN SEASONS IN GENEVA

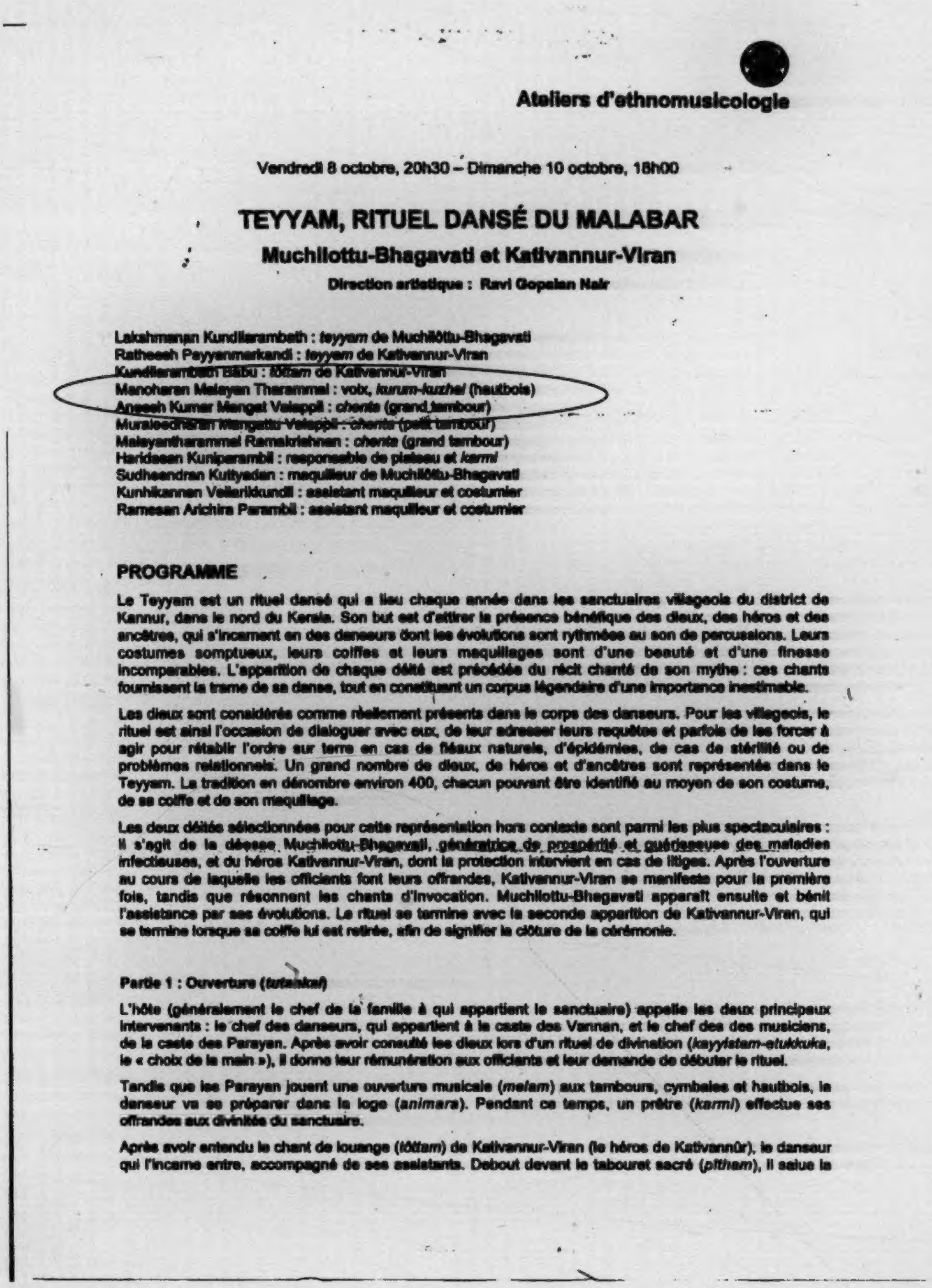
saisons indiennes
à Genève

GODS' OWN LAND

MUSIC
DANCE
THEATRE
RITUAL
PUPPETS
FILM

Ateliers
d'ethnomusicologie
www.adem.ch

Appendix G. Programme for a Teyyam Performance in Geneva, 2004



Ateliers d'ethnomusicologie

Vendredi 8 octobre, 20h30 – Dimanche 10 octobre, 18h00

TEYYAM, RITUEL DANSÉ DU MALABAR

Muchilottu-Bhagavati et Kativannur-Viran

Direction artistique : Ravi Gopalan Nair

Lakshmanan Kundilerambath : *teyyam* de Muchilōttu-Bhagavati
Ratheesh Payyanmarkandi : *teyyam* de Kativannur-Viran
Kundilerambath Bābu : *tōttam* de Kativannur-Viran
Manoharan Malayan Tharammal : voix, *kurum-kuzhal* (hautbois)
Aneesh Kumar Mangat Velappil : *chenta* (grand tambour)
Muraleedharan Mangattu Velappil : *chenta* (petit tambour)
Malayantharammal Ramakrishnan : *chenta* (grand tambour)
Haridasan Kuniparambil : responsable de plateau et *karmi*
Sudheendran Kuttyadan : maquilleur de Muchilōttu-Bhagavati
Kunhikannan Vellarikkundil : assistant maquilleur et costumier
Ramesan Arichira Parambil : assistant maquilleur et costumier

PROGRAMME

Le Teyyam est un rituel dansé qui a lieu chaque année dans les sanctuaires villageois du district de Kannur, dans le nord du Kerala. Son but est d'attirer la présence bénéfique des dieux, des héros et des ancêtres, qui s'incarnent en des danseurs dont les évolutions sont rythmées au son de percussions. Leurs costumes somptueux, leurs coiffes et leurs maquillages sont d'une beauté et d'une finesse incomparables. L'apparition de chaque déité est précédée du récit chanté de son mythe : ces chants fournissent la trame de sa danse, tout en constituant un corpus légendaire d'une importance inestimable.

Les dieux sont considérés comme réellement présents dans le corps des danseurs. Pour les villageois, le rituel est ainsi l'occasion de dialoguer avec eux, de leur adresser leurs requêtes et parfois de les forcer à agir pour rétablir l'ordre sur terre en cas de fléaux naturels, d'épidémies, de cas de stérilité ou de problèmes relationnels. Un grand nombre de dieux, de héros et d'ancêtres sont représentés dans le Teyyam. La tradition en dénombre environ 400, chacun pouvant être identifié au moyen de son costume, de sa coiffe et de son maquillage.

Les deux déités sélectionnées pour cette représentation hors contexte sont parmi les plus spectaculaires : il s'agit de la déesse Muchilottu-Bhagavati, génératrice de prospérité et guérisseuse des maladies infectieuses, et du héros Kativannur-Viran, dont la protection intervient en cas de litiges. Après l'ouverture au cours de laquelle les officiants font leurs offrandes, Kativannur-Viran se manifeste pour la première fois, tandis que résonnent les chants d'invocation. Muchilottu-Bhagavati apparaît ensuite et bénit l'assistance par ses évolutions. Le rituel se termine avec la seconde apparition de Kativannur-Viran, qui se termine lorsque sa coiffe lui est retirée, afin de signifier la clôture de la cérémonie.

Partie 1 : Ouverture (*tutankal*)

L'hôte (généralement le chef de la famille à qui appartient le sanctuaire) appelle les deux principaux intervenants : le chef des danseurs, qui appartient à la caste des Vannan, et le chef des des musiciens, de la caste des Parayan. Après avoir consulté les dieux lors d'un rituel de divination (*kayyistam-etukkuka*, le « choix de la main »), il donne leur rémunération aux officiants et leur demande de débuter le rituel.

Tandis que les Parayan jouent une ouverture musicale (*melam*) aux tambours, cymbales et hautbois, le danseur va se préparer dans la loge (*animara*). Pendant ce temps, un prêtre (*karmi*) effectue ses offrandes aux divinités du sanctuaire.

Après avoir entendu le chant de louange (*tōttam*) de Kativannur-Viran (le héros de Kativannūr), le danseur qui l'incarne entre, accompagné de ses assistants. Debout devant le tabouret sacré (*pītham*), il salue la